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ABSTRACT

Focusing on adolescent literature, this issue highlights the role of historian, writer, teacher, and reader in fact, fiction, and history. The following essays are included: "Doing the Literacy Tango" (J. L. Collier); "Biography and Books of James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier" (J. Bugniazet); "Fact, Fiction and History: the Role of Historian, Writer, Teacher and Reader" (C. Collier); Two articles in the section on "Fiction: The Past and Present Joined through Literature": (1) "Parallels between Fox's 'The Slave Dancer' and Melville's 'Moby Dick' and 'Billy Budd'" (M. L. Shattuck), and (2) "The Cocoon and the Time Capsule: Uses of the Past in Novels for Young Adults" (C. Hunt); two articles in the section on "History: Bringing It to Life through Adolescent Literature": (1) "'Beyond the Divide': A Springboard for Discussion of Current Concerns of Young Adults" (C. Hammer), and (2) "Historical Fiction Starts with the Student" (L. G. Gober and M. Angelotti); "To Tell the Truth or at Least a Little Nonfiction" (W. G. Ellis); "Bridging the Basics: The Young Adult Novel in a Back-to-Basics Society" (B. G. Samuels, et al.); "The Relationship between Character, Writer and Reader: An Interview with ALAN Award Winner Madeleine L'Engle" (J. Bugniazet); "Nonfiction: News from ALAN and Beyond"; "Still Trixie After All These Years" (E. A. Seay); "The Fervent Prayer of a Tennager's Parent" (R. Peck); "'Now that You Asked...'" (R. Cline and E. Poe); and "The Back Door" (C. Reed). (JD)

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A Theme Issue

Fact, Fiction and History

The Role of Historian, Writer, Teacher and Reader

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DOING THE LITERACY TANGO

James Lincoln Collier
New York, New York

One of the questions I am asked most about my work is how do my brother and I possibly manage to make a joint venture out of an activity as obviously private and personal as writing a book. The readers' puzzlement is understandable: writing is personal, and private. A writer works from a point of view that is his own. He is always saying this is how *I* feel about these things; this is the way it seems to *me*. Indeed, a great deal of what we get from the best writing is a personal view of the world: the irony of Charles Dickens, Hemmingway's sense of the world as an adversary, the rueful sentimentality of Laurence Sterne. How, thus, can two people, however close in point of view, bring a single stamp to one work?

In fact, Kit and I, as brothers are likely to, do share to a considerable extent, a common world view. Our parents had roots deep in New England; but they had left their home culture to move into a somewhat artistic, semi-Bohemian culture in New York. We grew up in this mix of cultures, one side of which valued hard work, human decency and a respect for the privacy of others; the other of which valued high-minded intellectuality, adherence to principle and a concern for the truth. (These virtues of course, when pushed too far, can turn into uncharitable inflexibility and self-righteousness.) As far as our writing is concerned, we thus share a view that what we put onto a page ought to be as truthful as we can make it–carefully researched, clearly thought-out and accurately described.

But our approach to writing differs in other ways. Kit sees himself essentially as a teacher, with all that implies. He began his professional career as a seventh grade social studies teacher, and although he moved into college teaching after a few years because he was drawn to scholarship, he has been a teacher all his life. In the books we do together his goal is to awaken students' curiosity - that is, get them to start asking questions. Readers who know our books will have some idea of what those questions are: Was the Revolution necessary? Who in fact were the patriots in that fight? What is economic freedom, and what is worth sacrificing for it? How did the racism which has been so much a part of the American experience became institutionalized? What has it cost us? I think any teacher who is using our books can mine them for questions like these, and undoubtedly find some of which we are unaware.

My approach to writing is different than Kit's. To me a piece of fiction works in some ways like music–a song, a symphony, an improvised jazz chorus. It is something which works on the emotions, and when I write I try deliberately to catch readers up in my story, to make them feel things, and in the end, if I am very lucky, to change their internal landscape a little by showing them a new way of looking at the world. My brother and I, although we are both addicted to the truth, otherwise have different aims in creating our books. How do we manage this?

To begin with, we have agreed that at some point in the process the entire story must pass uninterrupted through one consciousness. This is so that there is a consistency of language, of feeling, of "tone," a hard-to-define quality that is nonetheless present in most good writing, as for example the aforesaid irony of Dickens and the ruefulness of Sterne. Eventually, thus, I will sit down and write the book from start to finish.

But the book begins in Kit's head with a notion he wants to teach, a question he wants to raise in the minds of readers. He casts about for an historical event, or sequence of events, which can illustrate his point. Or rather, the mind being what it is, these arise simultaneously: that is, at one moment he sees both the event, and how he can illustrate a certain point. He then brings the idea to me: there was a black named Jack Arabus who sued for his freedom after the Revolution in an important case, which we might use to say certain things about race in America; there was an actual war between Pennsylvanians and Connecticutters during the Revolutionary period, which might be used to say something about the economic basis of freedom. He fills me in, and then I make a judgment about the dramatic possibilities in the idea. Some of the questions I must ask are: Is the story compact in time, so that it does not require too many flashbacks in telling? Is there plenty of action? Is there natural conflict between various of the major characters? Would our young protagonist realistically have a role in the events, rather than merely observing them?

I have to be very careful about this, for I know that there can be no doctoring of the events, no shifting them about in time for as much as a minute, no changing the locale for as much as a yard. And I–we–have made mistakes. For example, the action in *The Bloody Country* was spread out over too long a time, and we struggled mightily to keep the story glued together. For another, any time you are writing about slaves the action is perforce limited, which almost invariably means that a slave story must be built around an escape. However, the first two books in the Arabus family trilogy involved runaways. This was not the commonest black experience, and out of respect to the truth we did not want to show another black young person in flight in the third book. Yet a protagonist must always have a purpose, and those who have read *Who Is Carrie?* will see how we solved the problem–again, not without struggle.

Actually, all of this comes about a good deal more informally than the foregoing implies. We live some fifty miles apart, and talk to each other frequently on business, social or family matters. We may or may not be looking for an idea for a new book; that of course depends on our other committments. But as it usually works, if Kit comes up with an idea that we get enthusiastic about, we are likely to find a way to do it. He then works up a fairly detailed outline: here's the basic sequence of events, here are the characters, here is a rough story outline. I look it over, test it for dramatic problems and possibilities. We sit down together and adjust the outline as necessary so that the story will be both gripping and get the pedagogical point across.

Now we see our editor–Judy Whipple, now at Macmillan, for the early books, Olga Litowinsky at Delacourt for the more recent ones. We tell Judy or Olga what we want to do, and so far they've agreed; although both always have suggestions about one or another aspect of the books.

The next step is for Kit to supply me with a heap of re-

search–books on the period, scholarly articles on the ideologies involved, maps, drawings, whatever he can find. In addition, either separately or together, we visit the ground where the action will take place. We photograph period houses or features of the landscape, check old maps against new to see how roads and streams may have moved and visit historical museums where they exist.

Once I have digested the research, I sit down and write–pass the story through a single consciousness. It is agreed that I can go anywhere I want with the story at this point. Although of course I write out of the historical background, I feel free to invent as I like, knowing that my brother will in time have an opportunity to check for historical accuracy. The point is for me not to feel constrained: if I have a scene working the way I want, I want to be able to plunge forward as the drama leads, without having to worry about historical detail.

When I have finished a draft, it goes to Kit. His main task is to check the history, but he will also make suggestions about the story line: this scene seems flat, this seems improbable and so forth. We discuss the whole once more. Concerning questions he has raised about the story line, if I feel confident that I am right, he will accept my view, once he has argued his position. But questions of historical fact and interpretation are his province, and I must abide by his judgment. For example, in *My Brother Sam Is Dead* I wanted, near the beginning, to have the two boys who are at the center of the story to have a discussion out of earshot of their parents, and I set them to washing the dishes in the kitchen. This, my brother said, would not do; at that time males did not wash dishes. I had the boys instead go out to the barn to tend the animals, where they could talk without being overheard.

Once we have sorted out these problems–and sometimes matching the story we want to tell with historical detail requires a good deal of nimble inventiveness so as to subvert neither–I write a complete new second draft, of course shoring up weak points of which I am aware. (I have a tendency to keep forging ahead in the first draft, leaving weak scenes to be dealt with later.) This second draft then goes back to Kit, who goes over it once again, and after further discussion, we make such changes as are necessary. These ought to be minor; but a couple of times I had to do substantial revision on this second draft.

Then it goes to the editor. She will have comments. In most cases these are minor–we need to know a little bit more about A's background; it isn't quite clear why B did such-and-such; we ought to have a stronger reaction from C at this point. We can, of course, reject these editorial suggestions, and at times we have; but we have a tendency to accept them because she is bringing a fresh eye to material we have by this point begun to get a little fed up with. (Both of us are occupied with new projects, and it is always a little irritating to have to turn back to an old one.)

Then, finally it is done. It is clear that one reason why it all works is that there's a pretty strict division of labor in the process. We each have our bailiwicks, and so long as we continue to respect each other's area of expertise–which we do–we can avoid arguments. And in truth, we have not really ever had a serious argument, although we have come a few times to compromises with which neither of us was very happy.

Perhaps the most interesting of our collaborations, to me at least, was in the writing of our recent study of the Constitutional Convention, *Decision in Philadelphia*. Here we were not dealing with fiction; my role was solely to make readable material of which Kit was entirely in control. I confess that at the outset–we began thinking about the book in 1979–I knew far less about the Constitution than I ought to have. Once again we agreed that for consistency of tone, the whole book would have to pass through one consciousness. We decided then, that Kit would act as my teacher, and take me step-by-step through the Constitutional Convention, following an outline which he had devised. Chapter by chapter he gave me heaps of assiduously gathered material: biographies, endless abstruse monographs on subjects I didn't know existed, maps, copies of old newspapers, lists of ship tonnages and exports from American ports, and much more of the stuff of which historical research is made. Chapter by chapter I studied this material, digested it and worked it up into some sort of coherent form. When we finally finished we had a seven hundred page manuscript that was hopelessly disjointed, confused and in many cases wildly incorrect. But now I understood the Constitutional Convention, and we could begin. It would be two more complete drafts before we had the book in shape; but we got to where we wanted to go.

Collaboration, I think, is always difficult. I would not attempt it with just anyone. It is important to work with someone who can work out ground rules and stick to them, someone who thinks the way you do about most things and, above all someone with whom you can have a measure of mutual respect.

BIOGRAPHY AND BOOKS OF
JAMES LINCOLN COLLIER
AND CHRISTOPHER COLLIER

Judith Bugniazet
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC

Christopher (January 29, 1930) and James Lincoln (June 27, 1928) Collier were born in New York City. The brothers were brought up to have a wide array of interests. Their varied interests can be seen in their professional lives.

James still lives in New York City and makes his living as a free-lance writer of articles, adult fiction, nonfiction, children's and adolescent books. Though he considers himself to be a specialist in social science reporting, sex education and related fields, his writing has been greatly influenced by his love of music, particularly jazz. As a writer and trombonist he has traveled widely; often reporting from Paris or London. He has won numerous awards for his writing, including: the Child's Study Association Award for *Rock Star*; London Observer Book of the Year Award and American Book Award nomination for *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History*; National Book Award Nomination, Jane Addams Peace Prize and the Newbery Medal for *My Brother Sam is Dead*, written with his brother Christopher.

Christopher's career has taken him down a different, but related path. For over 25 years he has been a teacher, most recently a professor of history at the University of Connecticut. His interest in writing has come through his work in the classroom. Most of his writing is professional, usually for other historians. However, he is probably most widely recognized for the books he has written with his brother James.

Through these books he has attempted to correct myths about the American past by presenting a truer to life portrait than that typically

presented in children's books. He has researched the history for the historical fiction he has written with James as carefully as he researches material for his adult academic writing. The presentation of the history in the Colliers' books for young adults is as accurate as that found in any carefully researched scholarly work. If they say it snowed on a particular day in history; it did. Much of the dialogue in the books comes from actual letters and diaries.

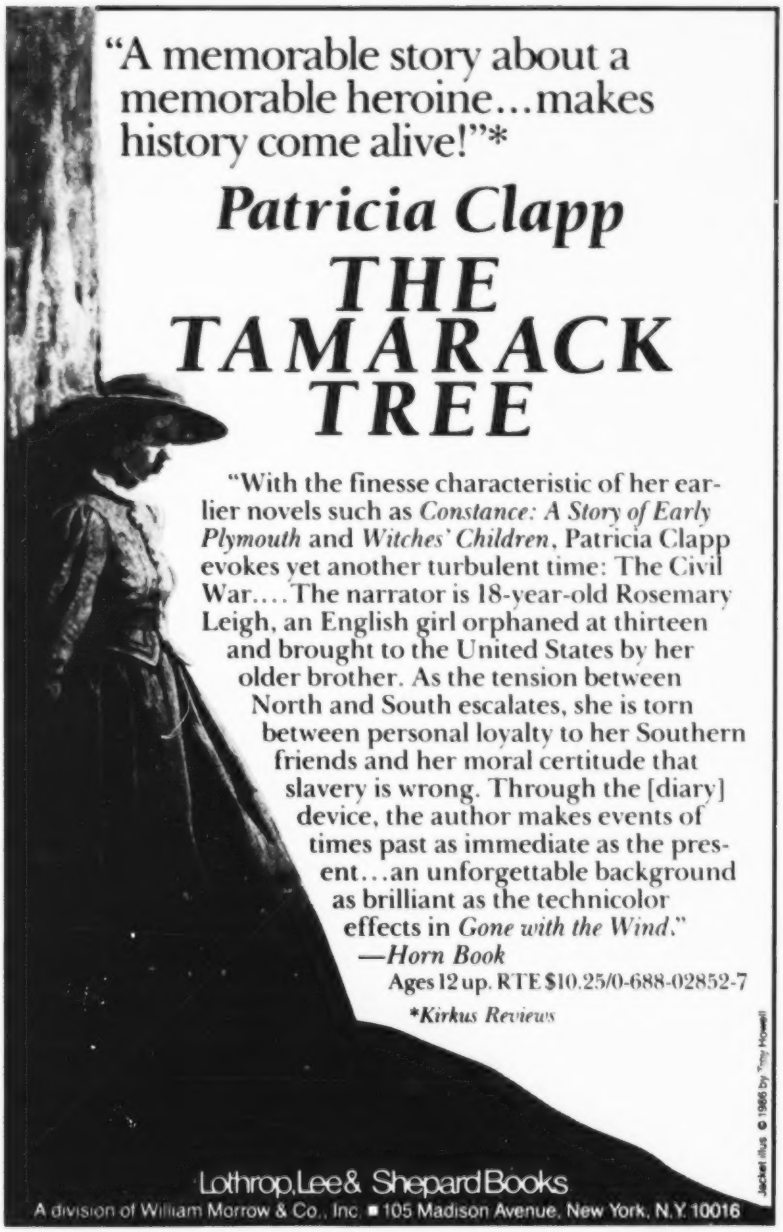
Christopher began writing and teaching because that is what historians do professionally, however he understands that he is a writer because writing is a part of his personal history. Though James may be the best known and most prolific writer in the family, their father has written short stories and biographies for teenagers. An uncle, aunt, cousin and ancestors as far back as the 17th century have been writers.

Books by James Lincoln and Christopher Collier

My Brother Sam is Dead. MacMillan, 1974.
The Bloody Country. Four Winds, 1976.
The Winter Hero. Four Winds, 1978.
Jump Ship to Freedom. Delacorte, 1981.
War Comes to Willy Freeman. Delacorte, 1983.
Who is Carrie? Delacorte, 1984.
Decision in Philadelphia. Random House, 1986.

Additional Books by James Collier

Battleground: The United States Army in World War II. Norton, 1965.
CB. F. Watts, 1977
The Chub Peabody Story: A Portrait in Courage. Popular Library, 1964.
Danny Goes to the Hospital. Grosset & Dunlap, 1970.
Fergy. Macmillan, 1987.
The Fine Art of Swindling. Grosset & Dunlap, 1966.
Give Dad My Best. Four Winds Press, 1976.
The Hard Live of the Teenager. Four Winds Press, 1972.
The Hypocritical American; an essay on sex attitudes in America. Bobbs-Merrill, 1964.
The Great Jazz Artists. Four Winds Press, 1977
Inside Jazz. Four Winds Press, 1973.
It's Murder at St. Basket's. Grosset & Dunlap, 1972.
Jug Bands and Handmade Music; A Creative Approach to Music Theory and the Instruments. Grosset & Dunlap, 1973.
Louis Armstrong. Macmillan, 1985.
Making Music for Money. Watts, 1976.
The Making of Jazz. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978.
The Making of Man: The Story of our Ancient Ancestors. Four Winds Press, 1974.
Planet Out of the Past. Macmillan, 1983.
Practical Music Theory: How Music is Put Together from Bach to Rock. W.W. Norton, 1970
Rich and Famous: The Further Adventures of George Stable. Four Winds Press, 1975.
Rock Star. Four Winds Press, 1970.
A Visit to the Firehouse. Norton, 1967.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FACT, FICTION AND HISTORY: THE ROLE OF HISTORIAN, WRITER, TEACHER AND READER

Christopher Collier
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut

Since 1974 when *My Brother Sam Is Dead* was published, I have spoken to perhaps a couple thousand students and several hundred public school teachers and librarians. Most of the students had heard the book read in class or had read it themselves in paperback. Their most frequent question was "How did you find out about Ned's head getting chopped off?" Those who had not finished the book always asked, "Does Sam really die in the end?"

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Those are questions I might answer in another place. I am writing here because so many teachers and librarians have asked another pair of questions: "As an historian, why have you chosen to present your findings through fiction; and how, exactly, can your books be best used in class?" I am tremendously gratified to find the books so widely used as classroom materials. My objective in writing them - as distinguished from my brother's which is to write an exciting tale - is to teach. If I can answer these questions in a way that enhances classroom use of the books, I consider this article well worth my time and effort.

There is no better way to teach history than to embrace potential learners and fling them into a living past. An historian must perform an act of creation that vivifies on paper scenes no longer replicable in concrete fact. An historian writing for young readers must become an active participant in the youngster's life, carry the youngster along as a participant in the historical narrative. Writer and reader must both feel part of the special history being told.

The historian's job, of course, is to replicate the past as accurately as posssible and to make it comprehensible to people living in the present. The assumption is that knowledge of how we got here will help us understand where we are. But such a pedagogical objective will not bring young readers to the shelves where history books are found. Teachers must first stand on the ground their students stand on and note which approaches are open from the teacher's world to the students'. Teachers must then withdraw to the larger world, collect their materials and bundle them up in a form suitable for transportation down the open lanes to the students' minds. It is a lot to do.

Editor's Note: As an historian, Christopher Collier writes primarily of the role of the history teacher. However, English teachers can adapt much of his discussion (theme, character development, foreshadowing, irony, etc.) to the literature curriculum, or can develop an interdisciplinary unit using the Colliers' books.

To vivify the past in detail and ambiance requires a first-hand familiarity with the records and artifacts of time and place; and the professional training to interpret these materials in ways that make sense to living people. When working with youngsters, a teacher of history must also be able to create a narrative floodtide that sweeps over the learners' ground and carries them along as a willing swimmer. The teacher must understand the universals of psychology, and must be able to use them as the human context for the attitudes and actions of the pasts to be created, and must use these understanding as a door to the learner's mind.

THE ROLE OF HISTORIAN AND WRITER

This is a very big order. Perhaps such a bundle of talents and skills is beyond the ability of one human to carry. But, if it is, then two can try to do the job. A professional historian and a talented, long-practiced writer of juvenile fiction who have had a life-time of working and playing together ought to be able to tote the load. And so, it seems, they can.

THE BROTHER SAM TRILOGY

My Brother Sam is Dead, The Bloody Country and *The Winter Hero*, constitute a trilogy of novels for young teenagers that attempts to elucidate a set of ideas that underlay events of the Revolutionary Era and that have continued to inform American society into the very present. Each novel presents readers with a tension between two conflicting elements of the American creed. *Brother Sam* develops the dichotomy between loyalty to established authority and loyalty to certain ideological principles; Bloody Country attempts to expose the frequent incompatibility of human values with property values; *Winter Hero* deals with the problem of conflict between economic need and ideological commitment.

The novels also carry at least one secondary theme: *Brother Sam* raises the question of war as a solution to human problems; *Bloody Country* looks at ecological considerations and the problem of federalism; *Winter Hero*, besides federalism again, attempts to reveal the options available to abused citizens in a democratic regime. The dramatic structure of each novel is developed around two elements: the historical narrative and a set of human relationships. The historical narrative is a fairly hard recreation of fact; the human relationships, though universally authentic, are fictitious.

The narrative in *Brother Sam* follows events of the opening years of the American Revolution from the perspective of a Connecticut town sharply divided between Loyalists and Patriots, a town which became the winter quarters of Continental troops in 1778-79. In *Bloody Country* the narrative

follows pioneers from Connecticut to the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, an area in dispute between the two states that eventually went to war over it. *The Winter Hero* is the story of Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1787. The perspective that underlies all three novels is known to historians as the Progressive interpretation. This view sees American history as moved more by conflict - of sections, of ideas, of classes - than by a more or less universal consensus.

The human dimension that is so essential to the literary value of the books is provided by tension between father and son in *Brother Sam*; teenage protagonist and his closest friend, a family-owned slave, in *Bloody Country*; and internally in *Winter Hero* as the protagonist attempts to overcome fear and feelings of inadequacy to become the hero that he perceives his much older brother-in-law to be. Each novel is a first-person narrative told by a 12-year old boy.

Taking the novels in turn, how do they fulfill the teaching function they were designed for? At the outset, let me say that the books will not teach themselves. Students will learn a good deal about the objective events depicted in the books and will understand - if without being able to articulate them - the central historical ideas presented. But they will need considerable guidance if they are to fully comprehend the themes that constitute the core of the books.

Historians of the American Revolution are not agreed as to the relative emphasis that should be given to the many motivating factors that impelled colonists to war in 1776. In *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, Sam takes the ideological position that traditional British liberties are being subverted by a king who would be a tyrant. But the conflict depicted in the book is not so much the struggle between English rulers and American subjects as one that pits Americans of one cast of mind against Americans of another. Sam's father is more or less apolitical, but he is certainly pacifistic. He wants to avoid the war at virtually any cost and justifies his position on the basis of obligation to authority while belittling the oppression involved in taxation without representation. Thus, when Sam declares (p.7) that "it's worth dying to be free," his father interprets freedom as "Free to mock your King? To shoot your neighbor? To make a mess of a thousand lives?"

The protagonist, 12-year-old Timmy, always suspects that there is an element of ego tripping in Sam's war mongering. He muses at one point that Sam was wrong to stay in the army when he was so badly needed at home. Glory-hunting as a motive for heroic action becomes the central human theme of *The Winter Hero*, but here in *Brother Sam* it receives only passing notice.

Many historians view the American War for Independence as much a civil war as a revolution. Therefore, we chose Redding, Connecticut as the locale for our story because the known number of Loyalists and Patriots there was about equal. Timmy, the protagonist, reflects this division in his own thinking as over and over again he mentally switches sides, first favoring the Patriotism of his brother, then the ostensible Loyalism of his father, then wavering and switching again.

This ambiguity is reinforced through the use of irony, a concept not over the heads of middle and junior high school students to whom I have talked. For starters, here is Sam in the book's opening scene wearing a scarlet coat while belittling the British troops in their scarlet coats by calling them lobsterbacks.

Central to the structure of the novel are two vital ironic turns of event. Father, a putative Loyalist and pacifist, loses his life because of the war, and as an outgrowth of his efforts to remain uninvolved in it. But further, he is taken by the British and dies on a prison ship, a prospect he himself had painted for Timmy in an effort to keep the boy from serving the Patriots - or even more symbolically, from serving a shadowy Mr. Heron who historically, and as depicted in our book, may well have been a double agent.

Of course, the dramatic structure of the book as a whole is built around the second vital irony - the death of Sam. Sam, encamped with his unit in his own home town, warns Timmy to be on the lookout for starving Continental soldiers out stealing cattle. When Sam and Tim attempt to prevent such a theft, Sam is framed by his compatriots in arms and executed in his own town by his own general for stealing his own cattle.

Beyond that, the major points we are developing come smashing through: the American Revolution was not an unmitigated blessing; and if the nation's most significant war brought so much suffering, shouldn't any war-like initiative cause deep concern?

The Bloody Country attempts to counterpoise human values and property values - both in the context of freedom. The protagonist is forced to leave Connecticut because over-cutting of the forest has caused the streams to dry up, and his father's mill is deprived of its water power. They travel to Pennsylvania and settle at a stream on land claimed by both Connecticut and Pennsylvania under their respective royal charters. The Revolution intervenes, but at its conclusion, war breaks out between the two now sovereign states. The Buck family includes Joe Mountain, an exact contemporary of Benjamin Buck. Joe is a black slave who grew up with Ben and is his closest friend.

The climax of the historical theme comes when Ben is finally able to articulate the difference between his requirements for freedom and Joe's. Ben knows that giving up the new family mill in Pennsylvania - which his mother and brother-in-law have lost their lives attempting to hold - will force him and his father back to Connecticut into a life as agricultural laborers. He is aware that he will be little better off than a well-treated slave, unable for economic reasons to control his destiny, even to marry and raise a family. Father had pointed out that by going back to Connecticut they would just "turn ourselves into nigger slaves" (p. 61).

Ben learns that his freedom will be based upon his possession of property - the mill, and Joe's on his leaving the mill as a free man. He works out the difference between his kind of freedom and Joe's in his mind, and finally he is able to articulate it. "It sure was strange. Joe had to leave the mill to be free, but I couldn't be free without it" (p. 176). Again, an irony central to the historical theme. For teachers interested in working with the concept of federalism there is much grist to grind in *The Bloody Country*. In the first place, the locale of the story is the cockpit of an inter-state struggle that could not occur under the present constitution, but - though unique - was quite likely under either the British colonial system or the Articles of Confederation. The circumstances of Joe's freedom involve a difference between Pennsylvania and Connecticut law; the withdrawal of U.S. troops and their replacement by Pennsylvania troops points up the idea of state sovereignty.

In *The Winter Hero* the point is made that Shays' Rebellion convinced many Americans that a stronger central government was needed, if only to put down local rebellions. The story line follows the historic events. Massachusetts farmers, impoverished by the neglect of their property and inflationary policies of the governments during the Revolution, are victims of the deflationary policies instituted by the mercantile elements of society at the war's conclusion. The farmers fail to participate in the political process and develop no strength in the legislature. In frustration, they turn to violence and ultimately, after two years of great suffering, bring about some redress of their grievances. The question as to whether the economic injustices would have been righted without the

violence is left open, and is explicitly raised in an epilogue. (Parallels to the Revolution itself, and to the Civil War are obvious, and teachers can turn this kind of analysis to the civil rights and anti-Viet Nam war movements of the recent past.)

The special thematic burden of *The Winter Hero* is that of the economic bases of politics. The book is loaded with economics at a level comprehensible to young readers. In the opening scene, only a page into the book, Justin, the 12-year-old protagonist, is concerned about the family's saw; he knew it would be expensive to replace. The entire introductory episode centers on debt, colateral, attachment or repossession and taxation. The division between debtors and creditors is deliniated, and the position of the law on the side of the latter is established. In the same chapter Justin discusses the cost of silver buttons, the purchase of candy, acts of heroism - or at least daring - inspired by a promise of a money reward, lawyers' fees, debts, taxes, property suits and the unequal distribution of wealth. The economic theme is clearly established.

The theme is dramatized by avoiding the middle-class tavernkeeping and milling families of the previous two books, and focusing on a typically poor farming family whose antagonist is a wealthy representative of creditors and merchants. The economic contrast is more sharply drawn when Justin, in order to pay off the family debt, is forced to go as a serving boy to live in the house of the wealthy creditor, Major Mattoon. The economic element approaches pathos when Justin reports the historical fact of Daniel Shays' selling a ceremonial sword that had been awarded him by Lafayette, an act that only extreme poverty would compel, but that cost Shays his standing of honor among the officer class.

Politics enters the story in the second chapter as Justin, his brother-in-law, Peter McCulloch (a genuine hero and Justin's *beau ideal*) and Shays discuss the problems of the farmers. Justin asks why such an unfair situation is permitted by the government (p. 15). The government is far off, Shays explains, and under the influence of lawyers, speculators and creditors. When Justin raises the question of electing representatives, Shays has to admit that the western Massachusetts towns just didn't bother to do it. And this initiates our sub-theme, Edmund Burke's famous statement that "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

The theory of democratic government gets more development when Justin wonders why Peter seems to be able to boss him around while Peter himself refuses to grant the government that same ultimate authority. Justin's sister, Molly, explains that Peter governs for the good of all, while the Massachusetts General Court seems to be governing in the interest of a small minority (p. 63). The explanation leaves Justin unsatisfied, and it should. What Molly describes represents an 18th-century woman's view of the family - a benevolent autocracy. Molly changes later when, with her husband in prison, she is forced into a leadership role, a role that is previewed when she threatens to put on men's clothing and march out with the Regulators (pp. 67, 132). But in the meantime, Justin continues to seek some understanding of the power structure that makes a few people rich at the expense of many. His friend, Levi Bullock, the glib cynic, explains the whole thing as simple power struggle. "... people who are on top don't like people underneath to be rebellious. They like people underneath them to do what they're told without making a fuss," he says.

Justin, who is determined to become a hero like Peter, is embarrassed because he is not fighting for anybody's rights - not even his own. He's joined up to seek some glory for himself. It is not long before he wonders if personal glory is really worth the misery involved in earning it, and after the death of his two friends, he is convinced that glory is a very hollow reward. But his understanding of power relationships is growing and he determines to give a lot more thought to the question.

Justin continues to see some hope in the system of representative democracy despite its obvious failures in regard to the Massachusetts farmers. As spring elections approach, the countryside looks for relief in a new pro-Shays legislature. Justin is too young to vote, but will someday be old enough. Not so for Molly; she will never be able to change her sex and the discrimination infuriates her.

The Shaysites win the elections all over rural Massachusetts, but relief for the farmers is little and late, the legislative process being as slow as it is. Nevertheless, the economic situation improves and some helpful legislation is passed. But Justin continues to ask if the Rebellion and all its misery was really a waste.

THE ARABUS TRILOGY

In a second trilogy, this time linked by telling the story of a single family, my brother and I attempt to describe the way free and slave blacks lived in the American north during the Revolutionary era. We attempt to make the point that the conclusion of the War for Independence and the adoption of a Constitution intended to establish justice marked only the beginning of an eternal effort to fulfill the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. The focus is on the relationship of the new Constitution to black Americans. The events cover the period from one of the last battles of the War in 1781 to the end of the first year of Washington's presidency, 1790. The central volume (written, incidentally, before the one that precedes it in the narrative) is *Jump Ship To Freedom*, the story of a 14-year-old slave who gets mixed up in the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

The series as a whole describes slave life generally, but this book tries to show the relationship of the writing of the Constitution to the sectional divisions over the slavery question. Historians of the Convention have offered fundamentally different perspectives, the most famous of which is Charles A. Beard's economic interpretation (alluded to in *Jump Ship* on p. 158). A more traditional approach saw the finished document as a hodgepodge of sectional and other compromises, all clustered around the keystone "Connecticut Compromise" which solved the large state-small state conflict. A more recent interpretation sees the Constitution as an effort by the established socially elevated minority to bring a controlled order to what they perceived to be an incipient mobocracy of the licentious common man. Our books perhaps best represent the historiography of the 1960s, the era of the so-called "Second Reconstruction," when civil equality for black Americans drew the attention and energy of so many scholars who began to see again - as they had in the middle of the 19th century -the centrality of slavery in the thinking of the Founding Fathers.

Daniel, a name of Biblical allusion, is the fictional son of an historic character, Jack Arabus, whose story is told in book one of the trilogy, *War Comes to Willie Freeman*. Dan's personal story is that of a self denegrating "nigger" who learns that being black does not necessarily mean beng intellectually or morally different from being white. His experiences convince him that his daddy was as brave and as smart as any white man. Inspired by his recently deceased father (pp. 144, 187), he achieves the self-confidence that permits him to carry out an heroic mission. He also behaves in a manner of high moral character. One of the most ironic moments in the book is when Dan, still perceiving himself as the stupid "nigger,"

reflects on his relative failure to make up a convincing cover story. His white acquaintance was even able to invent a better lie (p. 94). But gradually Dan learns that his value is not to be measured in his sale price (p. 111); that he had conducted his affairs intelligently (p. 116); and that he was as honest and honorable as anyone (p. 187). Certainly, he no longer perceived himself as a "nigger." (pp. 144, 163).

On the other hand, he encounters viscious blacks, notably in the person of his master's servant Big Tom, a brutal representation of the "Tomming" Negro who plays up to white expectations (p. 123), and dishonest materialist whites in the person of his master and mistress. This couple confiscates government bonds belonging to Dan's mother and hides them in the family Bible - symbolically integrating mammon into God's word (p. 5).

Dan's neighbor in Stratford, Connecticut is William Samual Johnson, historically a member of Congress under the Articles of Confederation and simultaneously a delegate to the Constitutional Convention sitting in Philadelphia. Daniel - surviving one horrifying episode after another - follows Johnson to New York and then to Philadelphia in order to get help in realizing some cash from the U.S. notes given to his father for service during the Revolution. Dan gets teamed up with a fictional character named Fatherscreft charged with carrying a message from Congress in New York to the Philadelphia Convention. Fatherscreft dies and entrusts the message, given orally, to Dan.

Dan learns during his time with Fatherscreft that if the Convention is not successful in writing a constitution that will be acceptable to all sections of the United States, the government will probably fall apart and his U.S. securities will be worthless. He sees that his future - the possibility of buying freedom for himself and his mother - is tied up in a successful outcome of the Convention (p. 115). But to his utter dismay, he also learns that the message that he has made a death-bed promise to carry to Philadelphia includes a plan to continue slavery in all the states and unsettled wilderness south of the Ohio River, to permit the continued importation of slaves and worst of all, to expedite the return of fugitive slaves from free states to slave states. At the moment he learns that Dan himself is a fugitive slave (p. 138).

His dilemma is excruciating. He considers alternatives such as running away to the frontier (pp. 139, 159, 173-4), but rejects them all because of honor - his word to the dying Fatherscreft - and duty to his father's intentions and his mother's welfare. Letting his family down, Dan thinks, would make him feel worse than being in slavery for the rest of his life (p. 124).

Throughout the story aspects of the framing of the Constitution are explained or alluded to: interstate relations (pp. 75-76, 86); financial problems (pp. 3, 7, 24, 113-14); the large state - small state conflict (p. 114). But central to the narrative of *Jump Ship To Freedom* is the point that American slaves were dealt with as bargaining chips in the great complex of sectional compromises that made the writing and ratification of the Constitution possible.

Dan's story is continued in book three of the trilogy, *Who Is Carrie?* This story focuses on a girl who lives the life of a slave in New York City, but who doesn't know where she came from. She learns - or thinks she learns - over the course of our story - who her parents were and, if she is right, that she is by rights not a slave. The helplessness of her position never - at least until the last page of the book - makes her hopeless. But powerlessness is the theme of the book; who, in 18th century America could be more powerless than a black female child who is a slave? To sharpen this theme, Carrie comes in contact with George Washington, the most powerful man in America.

The Arabus trilogy, like its three predecessors, attempts to illuminate American ideals - freedom and equality under a government of laws - by pointing to places where the practice fell short of the professions. The lesson we hope to teach is that ideals so elevated as those proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence can never be achieved, but nevertheless every American of every generation must join the struggle toward this great goal.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

All the books include a couple of pages at the end called "How Much of this Book is True?" Here we sketch briefly which elements are fictional and which are historical. The books have been carefully researched so that they carry not only well-developed interpretations of the events depicted, but authenticity of the detail that tells the story. Manuscript documents have been consulted in many cases. The scene in which Ned, the slave in *Brother Sam* is decapitated, for instance, occurred exactly as we have it, even to the words spoken by the British officers. My brother and I visited most of the sites of action and walked over many of them to measure relative distances, and, where modern construction did not interfere, to observe their perspectives.

Everything that happens to our historical and fictional characters actually did happen to someone. Historical characters do what they did in fact; our fictional characters do only what we found someone had done. The weather on given days was as we have it; people ate what we feed them and in general lived the way we depict their lifestyles - the heavy drinking, families broken by death, the subordinate position of women, children and blacks - and held the attitudes we describe.

THE READERS' ROLE

Taken together, the books all attempt to depict historical situations in which conflict dominated, and try to give to young readers the factual basis and the perceptual stance necessary for sound consideration of possible alternative decisions. What could the protagonists, their families, friends and antagonists have done differently? How would different decisions have affected the course of history? Do the actions of individuals have any real affect on the affairs of the world? A message conveyed in all the books is that movements once started have a way of getting out of control and bringing results that are unexpected and perhaps even terrible. We attempt to make our readers consider the questions. Was the outcome worth the suffering that it required?

Could the outcome have been brought about by peaceful means? Are ideals that can never be achieved worth struggling for? The answer to these questions quite deliberately is not provided in our materials. Life is not simple; history is never clear. A realistic understanding of the past requires an ability to live with ambiguities, unanswered questions and lose ends. An effective approach to the present and the future - one that maximizes control over one's destiny - requires action growing out of decisions based on incomplete knowledge and conflicting evidence. The trilogies have as their primary pedegogical intent the development in youngsters of a comprehension of life's complexity and an ability to deal with it.

FICTION:

THE PAST AND PRESENT JOINED THROUGH LITERATURE (TWO ARTICLES)

Parallels Between Fox's *The Slave Dancer* and Melville's *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*

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"Call me Ishmael," allegorist Herman Melville begins, and his readers are introduced to the ubiquitous "I" who tells the tale of a tremendous "white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and crooked jaw" (p. 159). As a final offering to the legacy of classic American literature, Melville leaves his readers with a Handsome Sailor who blesses his unjust condemners before he is hanged as the ringleader of an incipient mutiny. Through these two classic narratives, *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, Melville critically and descriptively discourses on major themes: youthful innocence vs. man's corruptible nature, good vs. evil, man's sometimes obsessive quest to see beyond the "wall" of the material universe, the sorrowful paradoxes of the human condition and the painful maturation of a man. These complex and powerful Melvillean themes reveal a profound and gifted writer who questioned much about life, living and the universe. "Today he (Melville) is often ranked with the rarified company of Shakespeare and other immortals of world literature" (*Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 2044); and yet, his appeal to the average American high school student of the 1980s is somewhat limited. Neither *Moby Dick* nor *Billy Budd* qualify as good choices for suspense reading. However, there is a plausible way to entice the somewhat disinclined student to the study of this literary master. A careful and perceptive pedagogue might persuasively open with a study of Newbery Medal winner Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer*. For within the few 127 pages of this young adult sea tale, a reader encounters Melvillean characters, theme, technique and symbols. Fox weaves a tale of prejudice and inhumanity as seen through the eyes of an 1840s Ishmael who is, likewise, a sole survivor of sorts. Fox's everyman, Jessie, like the handsome youth, Billy, suffers the consequences of impressment and achieves manhood in the process. After the numerous parallels between these works are carefully and clearly delineated, possible classroom approaches and techniques will become immediately apparent.

Indeed, characterization presents itself as the most logical introduction point to a study in parallels between Melville's and Fox's sea adventures, for both authors' "innocents" experience growth processes that can easily be compared. Jessie, Billy and Ishmael all take to the sea; however, only Ishmael willingly chooses this course of action, in order to satisfy "an everlasting itch for things remote" (p. 16). Melville's young voyager decides to "sail about a little and see the watery part of the world" (*Moby Dick*, p. 12). Contrastingly, "Baby Budd" and young Bollier are obliged to put to sea; impressment offers them no alternatives. Jessie's misadventure begins with a seemingly safe and brief visit to Aunt Agatha's in order to obtain candles. Much to the dismay of his seamstress mother and sister Betty at home, Jessie's lingering in the alleyways near Bourbon and Royal Streets gives ample opportunity to the sinister sea-men who grab young Bollier and stuff him into a foul-smelling canvas. "Like a pig to market," Fox describes how Jessie is carried aboard The Moonlight and forlornly strains to see the shore one last time as the slaver sails out into the darkness (p. 16). Likewise, the Handsome Sailor joins the crew of the Indomitable as a foretopman, but accepts his fate with little argument. Melville sketches the scene in which Billy's previous shipmates sorrowfully look over at him while he bids good-bye to the lads and his old peace-time merchant ship, The Rights of Man.

These similar farewells open doors to the revelations of worlds as both Billy and Jessie journey to manhood over a period of months. Again the reader recognizes strong parallels among all three youthful mariners and notes the authors' intended irony; maturation is not a pleasing nor enjoyable experience for any of them. Ishmael's evolution is sobering and disquieting for it shows him not love at the core of creation, but destruction instead. His vision robs him of all sense of kinship, and he alone survives the ordeal. Also, Jessie's growing pains are accentuated by the corrupt and negative nature of man. The universe which encloses young Bollier reeks of prejudice, injustice and cruelty, and these become the traveling companions of the boy from New Orleans. Jessie too, has little kinship with those on board, for no other man will openly recognize the ignominious actions of the slaver, The Moonlight. Perhaps Bollier's mental wounds run deeper than Ishmael's or Billy's, for as Fox explains, he (Jessie) carries a scar with him forever:

> *I was unable to listen to music. I could not bear to hear a woman sing. . . For at the first note of a tune or song, I could see once again as though they'd never ceased their dancing in my mind, black men and women and children lifting their tormented limbs in*

time to a reedy martial air . . . (p. 127)

The forbidden and nocuous can often cloak itself in deceiving forms, or can, by the sheer force of its malevolence, attract or beguile virtuous innocents. Such is the case with all three youthful travelers, for each is unmistakably drawn to their malefactors. *Moby Dick*'s narrator describes this strong drag he feels: "I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest. . . A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine" (p. 155). Somewhat similarily, Billy is drawn in that he recognizes no insidious intent in the master-at arms' actions towards him. Truly the innocent Budd cannot understand *why*, when the others warn him that, "Jimmy-Legs is down on you" (p. 68). And Jessie first draws comfort from the words of the seemingly righteous Saint Stout who pretends to befriend young Bollier by offering him garments and food, and by telling him a similar tale of his own impressment.

Both authors set up character contrasts between the negative and positive forces effectively, and each character foils the other appropriately. In Ishmael there is acceptance of the physical world and its limitations; in Ahab there is denial of this. Billy personifies youthful innocence and naivety; Claggart, jealous of these attributes, personifies the opposite. Jessie represents morality, compassion, empathy for human suffering and a belief in the equality of man; Stout, the first mate, exhibits none of these qualities. Cawthorne too, the captain of The Moonlight, is an extension of Stout's personality for he puts evil thoughts into action. Thus, Ahab, Claggart and Cawthorne/Stout can be labeled as tragic heroes of sorts, although Fox's characterization of Cawthorne is minimal. Truly Ahab and Claggart are monomaniac in their pursuits, and they could better be classified as "demonic" heroes for they hated and defied the universe and goodness respectively. Their obsessions became diabolical. Cawthorne, on the other hand, is a Faustian hero of sorts. He defies what is morally right, essentially defies God and ends (the reader assumes) in hell.

As Dansker assists Baby Budd in the excursion on the Indomitable, so Purvis is the "old salt" who befriends Jessie. It is the incident with the stolen egg which reveals the true nature of Stout to Jessie, and helps him recognize the redeeming qualities in the "Irish bucket," Purvis.

Motifs and symbols abound in all three works and help to reenforce the parallels again. Most noticeably, colors are symbolic in both *Moby Dick* and *The Slave Dancer*. Ironically the two colors most emphasized are opposites. Critic William Elery Sedgwick notes that it is whiteness which becomes appalling to Ishmael, the whiteness of the whale (pp. 644-645). And it is the color black which becomes repulsive to Jessie, the blackness of the suffering, shackeled slaves. Names, too, take on symbolic significance. Most readers recognize the Biblical references which appear in both *Billy Budd* and *Moby Dick*, but the names of "Billy" and "Jessie" share similar everyman qualities also. These names, connoting images of youth, innocence and inexperience, appropriately characterize their bearers. The ships' names, in addition, share symbolic qualities. In *Billy Budd*, the Rights of Man, an allusion to Thomas Paine's famous essay, is a peace-time vessel. Billy is taken from this ship and impressed onto the Indomitable, a usurper of rights. Perhaps not as strongly symbolic, but likewise evident, is the slaver's title of The Moonlight. The actions that occur aboard this vessel are illicitly covert. The Moonlight, to avoid discovery and capture, stocks various flags which they hoist discriminately, depending upon the allegiances of their pursuers. The term "moonlight" then, appropriately applies to the illegal and secretive ventures of Fox's slaver.

Major themes in all three novels are supported with many motifs. In *Moby Dick*, Queequeg's coffin; In *Billy Budd*, Billy's habit of stuttering; and in *The Slave Dancer*, Jessie's repeated act of "dancing the slaves" all ironically emphasize the paradoxes of human life and situation, for each object, action or characteristic contradictorily shifts in meaning and significance. According to critic Sedgwick's essay on *Moby Dick*, the coffin, which Ishmael's heathen companion initially makes for himself, becomes an object of religious and artistic appreciation when Queequeg recovers. Later, it serves to save Ishmael by functioning as a life-buoy (Sedgwick, p. 643). Billy's habit of stuttering or becoming tongue-tied when frustrated is a defect which naturally evokes sympathy, for this handicap seems to accentuate more the helpless innocence of the young sailor. Melville's repeated references to Billy's vocal impediment foreshadow trouble for the young Budd, and unfortunately, it is this very defect which leads to Billy's demise. Likewise, Jessie's "talent" at playing the flute becomes a liability when he discovers that his purpose aboard the slaver is to "dance the slaves." Irony too intensifies the very act of slave-dancing, for this involvement is hardly enjoyable to the blacks. Jessie barely manages to perform his duties, and his mortification and remorse become apparent as Fox writes:

> *I played on against the wind, the movement of the ship and my own self-disgust, and finally the slaves began to lift their feet, the chains attached to the shackles around their ankles forming an iron dirge, below the trills of my tune. . . I was to perform this service every other morning. . . (and) I dreaded the coming of daylight.* (p. 67)

If similarities between Fox's and Melville's works exist on all levels (stylistic, symbolic, characterizational), these similarities are most strongly reinforced by the parallels found on the thematic levels. Reference to other similar themes has been mentioned before, but strong analogies can be drawn between the major allegorical themes presented in both *Moby Dick* and *The Slave Dancer*. The Pequod and The Moonlight become man's universe and both character-narrators embark on a voyage. The youths are attached (through choice or by force) to captains/first mates who defy God, the law and the universe in order to pursue their own egomaniacal quests. Both captains are the embodiment of evil, and this (especially in the case of *Moby Dick*) is evidenced not so much by the goals of their individual quests—Cawthorne's being monetary and Ahab's being personal knowledge—rather, these evil doers commit the greater blasphemy by "turning the harpoon," so to speak, against their own human companions, the crew, and against Cawthorne's precious cargo, the slaves. Their disrespect and lack of value for human life, any form of human life, truly characterizes them as evil; and thus, in a spiritually thematic sense, evil is punished.

Both Ahab and Cawthorne perish, and the manner in which they die is fittingly appropriate. In *The Slave Dancer*, as Jessie and Ras, Jessie's black alter-ego, creep from their hiding place in the fetid hold of the ship, the first object to catch their attention is the form of the lifeless and dangling Benjamin Stout who, "caught like a huge fly in a tangled web of rope, stared blindly at the sky" (p. 108). Turning a moment later, they behold a choking Cawthorne who "lay against the mizzenmast, seeing nothing" (p. 110). As the two frantically swim to shore, Jessie turns back once to see the ship "sinking slowly from view," and against the earthen glow of the sky young Bollier spies Cawthorne's hand "clawing the air." This grave setting reminds the reader of a similar closing scene presented in *Moby Dick*. One recalls images of a mammoth and victorious white leviathan which rises and dives triumphantly with a staring, lifeless Ahab tangled and roped to its side. Thus, the sea

becomes a purging force, washing away the evil in its baptismal waters, and from these waters new life is given; Jessie and Ishmael, the fatherless wanderers, are delivered. But paradoxically, not before both young mariners have been prodded, fondled and sobered by death, corruption and other dark fates.

Truly *Moby Dick* presents much more to the reader than this somewhat simplistic overview suggests; there are additional interpretations and considerations which should be presented. Yet Melville himself little expected recognition or total comprehension from his audience, and likewise expressed doubts at his own ability to understand or completely comprehend the mysteries of the universe. In an 1851 letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne discussing *Moby Dick*, which is reprinted in *Moby Dick: An Authoritative Text*, Melville writes:

> *. . . not one man in five cycles, who is wise, will expect appreciative recognition and understanding from his fellows.*
>
> *. . . Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of this great allegory—the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill-comprehended.* (p. 566)

Perhaps then, ambiguity is an intentional and sometimes good thing. And yet, in light of the presentation given concerning Fox's *The Slave Dancer* and Melville's works, a reader must clearly recognize parallels between this 1973 adolescent publication and the earlier masterpieces of classic American literature.

The perceptive instructor can utilize the similarities in these works for two purposes: to lead a rather reluctant student to the study of the American classicist, Melville, by beginning first with the Newbery Medal winner's novel; and to offer additional, independent study to the highly motivated student who seeks Melvillean form and message in today's writers, Two possible approaches are outlined below:

With the first group a teacher may begin developing interest by discussing the genre form itself—the sea adventure.

I. Filmstrips, historical background, other tales (*Old Man and the Sea*) may serve as starting points.
II. A study of nautical terms and/or vocabulary terms from Fox's book can follow.
III. General discussion on New Orleans and the South; pre-Civil war America; the slave trade.
IV. Role-playing activities (before reading):
  A. Black/white encounter in which white expresses prejudice against the balck or vice-versa.
  B. Students representing different minority groups explain ways in which they feel suppressed.
  C. Pretended argument between captain of a ship whose primary goal is to deliver a cargo, and a concerned shipmate who worries about the safety of the cargo and crew.
  D. Power play—one person selects and assumes a position of power; the other chooses an inferior position; situation should develop.
V. Reading *The Slave Dancer*.
VI. Short writing assignment: students use the first person point of view and explain the arguments and reasoning of one of the following characters from *The Slave Dancer*: Jessie, Purvis, Ned, Cawthorne, Daniel, Ras or Stout.
VII. Introduction to Melville—author's own sea background.
VIII. Reading of *Billy Budd*.
IX. Concluding Activities:
  A. Create a sociogram which shows characters' relationships and varying levels of relationships.
  B. Give an oral report which explains parallels between *Billy Budd* and *The Slave Dancer*.
  C. Write a short paper discussing Billy and the slaves as victims.
  D. Test.

With the second, highly motivated group, probably less preliminary activities are preferable; the instructor might begin with a reading of *Moby Dick* instead. Independently, the students could then read *The Slave Dancer* and use one of the following as composition and/or independent research topics:

I. Composition
  A. Comparison/Contrast of Authors' techniques: the use of irony, symbolism and imagery in Fox's *The Slave Dancer* and *Moby Dick*.
  B. Parallel themes in Fox's *The Slave Dancer* and Melville's *Moby Dick*.
  C. Foil characters: Ahab vs. Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, Jessie vs. Cawthorne/Stout in *The Slave Dancer*.
  D. Literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical levels of *Moby Dick* and *The Slave Dancer*.
  E. Poetic forms presented in the literature of Paula Fox and Herman Melville.
II. Research Topics
  A. The slave trade.
  B. The Underground Railroad.
  C. Sailing—whaling/slaving vessels.
  D. The whaling trade.
  E. Impressment.
  F. Melville's background—relationship to works.
  G. Fox's background.

Either of these approaches, and any of these suggested activities will lead both the student and teacher to a heightened understanding of Herman Melville and to an accentuated respect for Paula Fox. Truly one will recognize shades of the 19th century prose stylist in Fox's realistic portrayal of a slaver's 1840s expedition to the coast of Africa. Most important, and perhaps distinctly separate from Melville, is Fox's emphasis on the humiliating and debasing exploitation of the slaves. Cringing with remorse, the reader embarassedly acknowledges the actions of some of his earlier ancestors, and cannot help but learn a very bitter lesson when Fox descriptively incorporates tragic scenes in which the shackled Negroes are unceremoniously dropped overboard, forced to squat on latrine buckets, caped and garmented for a mock ball and "danced" by young Bollier. Thus, a reader can learn much from the contemporary author Paula Fox. The complexity, intensity and depth of Melville's masterpieces may not be there, but surely the message, meaning, characterization and technique follow suit. *The Slave Dancer* is a credible and legitimate introduction to Melville, the literary master, and is a credible and legitimate quality presentation in itself.

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The Cocoon and the Time Capsule: Uses of the Past in Novels for Young Adults

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Some people see adolescence as a stage between two other states—a cocoon stage, separating the life of the caterpillar from that of the butterfly. Though every butterfly is different, the process stays the same; caterpillars have grown wings before, and caterpillars will in the future. The butterfly of 1942 looks like the butterfly of 1962 or 1982. Others see adolescence as a unique moment, a sort of time capsule or collection of particular problems and experiences. The time capsule of 1942, for instance, would contain different items than would one of 1962 or 1982, with no real or imagined continuity. Most books for young adults present adolescence as a time capsule, not a cocoon; since the 1960s, the world of the typical young adult book has been limited to the immediate present, the "here-and-now." Yet, as the 1980s progress, authors and teenagers are beginning to rediscover the value of the past.

What special problems in dealing with time does the writer of YA novels face that differ from the problems of writers for other age groups? These difficulties fall into two categories: the uniqueness of the adolescent *experience* and the uniqueness of each adolescent generation's *culture*.

Both of these "givens" severely limit the writer. The criterion of the uniqueness of adolescent experience absolutely requires that existing wisdom be set aside; the adolescent, by definition, must make the transition to adulthood himself or herself, not vicariously. The experience of other generations becomes, understandably, secondary—*from the adolescent's point of view*. The problem thus becomes one of perspective. To what extent can, or should the writer restrict the novel's perspective on time to that of the teenage protagonist? Must the reader see the cocoon from the inside only? Most of us would agree: adolescents today (at least in western countries) feel that their experience differs in important ways from the experience of either children or adults. Attaining one's adult size and appearance, reaching sexual maturity and taking on at least a tentative adult role are once-in-a-lifetime "tasks," with once-in-a-lifetime anxieties. Fiction for teenagers must and does reflect the unique qualities of these years, and some narrowing of focus necessarily does occur.

The conventions of the young adult novel reinforce the separation of the adolescent's experience from that of others. While the main figure in a children's book may be a stuffed bear (Pooh), a child (Dorothy of Oz), an imaginary being (the Gingerbread Man) or even an adult (Mr. Popper among his penguins), *the protagonist of the adolescent novel is nearly always a young adult*. The point of view is, thus, exclusively adolescent; it is rare to find either modifications of this basic outlook or additions to it—for instance, through glimpses into the consciousness of others. The limited cast of characters in the junior novel adds to the normal isolation of teenagers the feeling that adolescents *are cut off from adult society*. Even the more craftsmanlike junior novels lack characters over, say, 19—adults usually occurring only as Parents, Teachers or Problems. Authors of young adult books speak of getting the parents out of the way so that the teenagers can make choices that mean something, but the almost universal absence of functioning adults is, often, more than a technical device; it makes a statement about the irrelevance of adults and their experience in the adolescent world.

The second special problem for the YA fiction writer concerns the uniqueness of each adolescent generation's culture. Since fiction for this age group focuses so exclusively on teenagers and their world, its backdrop, customs and its language must ring true. Everyone is familiar with the adolescent focus on self-image, involving clothes, cars and slang, and everyone knows that these fashions change regularly. The automobile books of the 1950s—*Hot Rod, Street Rod, Road Race* and the like—mirror a real and consuming interest of the period. But who reads those books now? Girls shop for a prom dress in Du Jardin's *Wait for Marcy*, for name-brand sneakers in Conford's *Seven Days to a Brand New Me*. Each girl is looking for something really important to her, but neither the dress nor the sneakers would be at all important to the other girl; the prom dress belongs to the 1940s time capsule and the pair of Pumas to the 80s. So, too, the slang of one teen-age generation means little to that generation's children 20 years later; most of the "texts" in the later generation's time capsule would be different. ("Holy cats" is already antiquated enough to need explanation in Summers's *Girl Trouble*, published in 1953 (p. 167). The characters of a 1970 drug novel, *The Peter Pan Bag*, talk much about the "grass laws" and about "integrity;" their speech accurately mirrors the strange, pompous righteousness of those years—"don't you really feel that existentialism today is the mirror image of Nirvana?" (pp. 100-101). No wonder these characters (along with their readers) consider themselves and their problems unique; they scarcely even speak the same language as previous generations of adolescents.

Both because of the narrowed perspective of adolescence (metamorphosis as seen from the inside of the cocoon) and the quick obsolescence of teenage culture (the era seen from inside the time capsule), one generation in YA fiction seldom considers the possibility of learning from another; parents' and grandparents' experiences are simply not relevant. Though Judy Blume's teenagers sometimes try to see their grandparents (but not usually their parents) as real people, they can only focus on directly egoistic concerns:

> *Garfa started Newman's furniture store when he was young, in the olden days. Daddy took it over thirteen years ago when Grandma died and Garfa retired. I never knew my grandmother but everybody says I look like her.*
>
> (*It's Not the End of the World*, p. 49)

Although grandfather actually remarries and adjusts to a new life in his later 60s, neither his changes nor those of the heroine's parents have much real meaning to her. To Norma Fox Mazer's Trissy, even less relevance seems possible; the past is at best a curiosity:

> *He says people used to have their hands chopped off for stealing, their ears slashed away, their noses clipped, and their eyes gouged out. He points his*

finger. His mean little eyes sparkle. He wakes everybody up. (p.58)

What are the *results* of these special problems in YA fiction? Do the author's narrowed focus on the teenager's perspective and his/her faithfulness to the customs and language of one particular era limit the quality and value of YA novels?

First, the isolation of the teenager in many of these books denies any significance to the past. This is particularly evident in the "problem novels" of 1969-80, showing up differently in the works of different authors. Take Paul Zindel, for instance. His accurate ear enables him to write some witty and authentic-sounding dialogue—but to what end? One and all, his characters come across as misfits who share their author's view that nothing important could possibly have happened before *they* came along. They see their parents as wierdos who fail to understand either them or the meaning of life. A few, like the mother in *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon*, bear out the characters' poor opinion of them; others, like the parents in *I Never Loved Your Mind*, are "plain, nice, detached, insignificant people" (p. 83), well-meaning folk who have failed to take control of their offspring soon enough to avoid being trampled on by them. Nowhere in these novels do we feel a sense that other teenagers, maybe even of the detested parents' generation, have had their own troubles. There can be no real significance to the events of the novels, for they seem to involve only the very idiosyncratic characters who inhabit that particular book. Adolescence is not a normal, universal process, but a unique and unpleasent persecution.

In a peculiar and sinister twist on this theme, adults in some young adult novels have become *real* enemies; this implies that they have learned nothing in their own past except ways to perpetuate unfairness and cruelty. Much of the controversy about Robert Cormier's novels seems to center on this very characteristic in his adults: their invulnerability to human experience, whether their own or that of the adolescents in their care. Brint, the interrogator in *I Am the Cheese*, observes cynically to Adam that "There is panic in your eyes again," and asks, "Did those words—life and death—disturb you?" (p. 170). The same detachment pervades the General's conversations with his son in *After the First Death* and the advice of the Handyman to Barney throughout *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*. The word "again" in the interrogator's remarks stands neatly for the unnerving quality of these adults—an acceptance of meaningless repetition, of awful experiences that happen over and over without bringing about learning, maturity or growth.

If the protagonist is limited to the narrowed perspective of adolescence and if the adults around him show neither the wisdom of their own experience nor the sensitivity needed to deal with the young, then the whole milieu of the novel becomes less plausible. The book set in the "here-and-now" is one thing; a book which denies the passage of time, the existence of other worlds, is quite another matter. Some of Judy Blume's early novels, for instance, center so much on a single *problem* (will Tony's family's maid notice what happened to his sheets? Can Deenie figure out how to masturbate in a cast?) that the individualized "world" of each novel scarcely connects with other places, other generations. It is almost as though no one had ever been an adolescent before.

The problem shared by Blume and Zindel extends beyond American YA books. K.M. Peyton, a widely acclaimed and prolific British author, exhibits the same flatness of locale and time. Her characters, too, exist in a vacuum, a time capsule. We cannot imagine that Jonathan's mother in *Prove Yourself a Hero* and *Midsummer Night's Death* has ever been troubled by thoughts, much less doubts; she must always have been just as she is now. There can be no past.

Surely this exaggeration of the here-and-now does not serve the reading public for which it was intended. Whatever the individual's struggle to "find" himself, he can hardly do so without any reference to *other* people and times. A sense of the continuity of generations must somehow be gained if the adolescent is to emerge successfully into adulthood.

The isolation of adolescents from other people, the denial of previous generations' experience, and the assumption that current problems are unique recur in most of the YA books of the "problem novel" period. But these are easy targets—"timely" stories trapped in their own timelines. The more important questions concern works which *do* make use of the past. These fall into two groups: those actually set in the past and those in which the past plays an important role in the events of the present.

In the historical works, many uses of the past turn out to be either decorative or metaphorical. The largest class read by adolescents consists of those familiar gothic romances where a setting in the past, even the rather distant past, in no way guarantees anything more than costuming and perhaps a few colorful oaths. These books do guarantee lots of sex and violence; drugstore-rack "bodice-rippers" for adults show this clearly. So do YA books like Stiles's *The Star in the Forest*, a romance of the sixth century which features evil nobles, noble commoners, a brutal wedding-night scene, witches in the forest, trial by combat, babies exchanged at birth and so on. The historical trappings merely dress up "flat" characters and provide excuses for the idiotic action.

Moving up a notch from the bodice-rippers, we find more "respectable" YA novels using the past just as superficially. K.M. Peyton's award-winning *Flambards* trilogy, set in the period between World War I and World War II, bears no signs of the implications of wartime (beyond a faddish Marxist preference for grooms and stableboys over landowners—a feeble "exposé" of the bad old days). An acerbic article by Dominic Hibberd analyzes the historical background as meaningless: "if the *Flambards* trilogy is meant to be seen as a microcosm of its time, then its refusal to face urban problems and its failure to grasp the significance of the war itself are weaknesses of a pretty serious kind" he suggests; but then, "perhaps Mrs. Peyton is really not concerned with (such) topcis.... If that is the case, we must realize that the trilogy is not of any importance as an historical novel" (p. 127).

A second way of using the past in historical novels for young adults is to exploit it primarily *as metaphor;* thus, it is not surprising that many of the better stories occur during either the American Revolution or World War II. (Those set during the American Revolution appear to be modeled, whether consciously or not, on *Johnny Tremain.*) Revolutionary stories tend to be pretty good; the situation enables a clever author to frame his character's inner troubles within a genuine struggle. The Colliers' *My Brother Sam Is Dead* uses these opportunities skillfully. Divided loyalties, danger, wilderness travel and fighting occur naturally in these books. The struggles of adolescents over the course of the centuries to achieve a mature identity, separate from that of their parents, find a ready and effective metaphor here.

Of the World War II books written in the 1960 and 70s, many are openly autobiographical, like July Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*. This book remains memorable not only through its evocation of an internment camp for Japanese-Americans, but through the vision of an author who can remember it all as if it had happened last week, yet adds the perspective of 20 years to that immediacy. Jean Little, a Canadian author, recollects and adds to her childhood memories of the war in *Listen for the Singing* and other works. War also frames the character's growing up in Ella Leffland's *Rumors of*

Peace, an authentically dusty depiction of refinery town in California before and after Pearl Harbor. All these authors make the war period come alive for readers by showing it as an authentic focus of their own adolescent years.

But not every writer of the 1960s or 70s or any other decade necessarily wants to use a wartime setting. There are also novels with a contemporary setting that acknowledge the past *as a necessary part of the plot itself*. Sometimes an adolescent hero has to find out something about his parents' past in order to confirm his own identity. An obvious variant on this is the adoption story: the alienated adolescent sets out on a quest to find out who he or she really is. Along the way as in *Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye*, the heroine needs to immerse herself in the period she is investigating:

> *In December of 1959, the Simmons' Mills Baptist Church had postponed its Christmas pageant because of a severe snowstorm.*
>
> *In December of 1959, Natalie realized, Julie Jeffries became pregnant* (p. 90).

The plot *requires* that the adolescent characters extend their imaginative range beyond their own lives and families to other times and places.

Abnormal situations and states of mind may also mandate a search into the past. The mother's death, in both Holland's *Of Love and Death and Other Journeys* and Peck's *Father Figure*, forces the teenage protagonist to reassess the past, come to terms with the absent father and accept him for the present and future. The past really becomes crucial in novels about mental imbalance. To one degree or another, these follow the classic course of seeking the past causes of mental illness; thus, Lisa's friends in Neufeld's *Lisa, Bright and Dark* and helpful therapists in Oneal's *The Language of Goldfish* and Guest's *Ordinary People* help the troubled adolescent protagonists find what made them the pathetic, often suicidal people they are. Most spectacularly, the deeply troubled heroine of *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* spends month after month with the painstaking Dr. Fried, exploring relationships from the past in order to make sense of the present. Only the fantasy world of Yr has meaning for her; the real world presents only fragments and makes no sense. (Carrie in *The Language of Goldfish* has the same problem of fragmentation.) Gradually, crucial scenes from the past take on meaning. The prison bars of Yr dwindle and turn into the bars of an infant's crib—an infant whose mother has gone suddenly to the hospital and left an indifferent nurse in charge. Dr. Fried shows Deborah how years of repetition have given that memory force. But the doctor knows, as the patient does not, how far back the causes of Deborah's misery reach, through three generations and the experience of the holocaust. Only through an acceptance of the past can sanity exist in the present.

Rural characters, as well as neurotic ones, seem able to understand the past. All of the five Appalachian novels discussed by Carolyn Mathews Hinson in "Appalachian Literature and Adolescent Reader" reflect a "rootedness based on a concept of 'the continuity of life'" (p.10). The main character of James Forman's *Ballad for Hogskin Hill*, one of these books, is indoctrinated by his grandmother Zorah into the importance of family history and the notion that he is what he is because of family tradition going back to the 18th century Kincaids, brilliant fighters who always chose lost causes.

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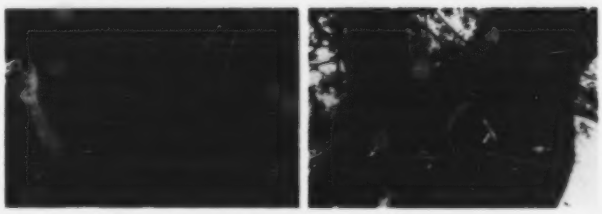

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"Without her (Zorah's) notebook and the headstones in the cemetery, they would be like other Creekers, *without a past*" (p. 36). As in the Cleavers' books, a sense of time becomes a tremendous asset, a sign of maturity.

Four of Henson's five Appalachian novels date from the very end of the 1970s. And as the 1960s and 70s fade from view and the era of the problem novel ends, the past seems to be making a comeback in YA literature. Participants in a Children's Literature Circle session at SAMLA in 1980 seemed to agree with the first half of this paper when it was delivered there; participants at the conference of the Children's Literature Association in May of 1985, on the other hand, spent three days exploring the whole subject of time in children's books–including YA novels. Several things seem to have happened. First, more attention is being given to the technical aspects of children's and YA literature (such as time) as criticism in this field matures. One of the most interesting parts of the conference was a presentation by two prominent authors of books for older children and adolescents, Joan Blos and Zibby Oneal, on the problems of handling time. They discussed in particular the problem of a necessarily short perspective (e.g., that of a six-year-old) versus such longer ones as an adult's; they also explored the implications of this problem in writing actual historical fiction for young people.

Second, it seems that writers who handle the past with respect have become more popular and/or more acceptable than was the case a decade ago. Marilyn Leathers Solt's survey of Newbery Medal and Honor Books points out that historical fiction "dominated" the awards in the 1930s, but had shrunk by three quarters in the 1960s, while "two-thirds of those honored through 1951 are out of print" (p.87). But by the time the article appeared, changes had already begun. Since 1978, the top award has gone to *two* works in which the past plays a central part–*The Westing Game* and *A Gathering of Days*. Writers of historical fiction, many of whom had been writing before the "problem novel" era and kept on writing through the worst of it, emerged into the daylight and were recognized. By 1985, it seemed natural for the Children's Literature Association to give its Phoenix Award to Rosemary Sutcliff–a fine and critically acclaimed historical novelist about whom relatively little had been heard for some years.

Third and perhaps most significant, we are beginning, as a society, to accept the past once more. Nearly every evening, news broadcasts show crowds of people visiting the Vietman War memorial–accepting, apparently, the *fact* of that war's occurrence. This kind of shift in consciousness means not merely a political shift to the right, but a more profound change toward a mode of thinking–one which "conserves" the experience of the past. Recent popular movies include *Back to the Future*, about a teenager who journeys into the past and meets his own parents as adolescents. Judy Blume now writes books like *Tiger Eyes*. M.E. Kerr has moved on from the narrow perspective of *Gentlehands* (will Buddy's grandfather, with his Nazi past, be a social asset–or the reverse?) to *I Stay Near You*, a recent release in which the reader can follow three generations of adolescents in, respectively, the 1940s, 1960s and 1980s.

The past, then, has changed from being something usually excluded from YA novels of the 1960s and 70s, or "used" merely for decoration, or as metaphor, or to solve a personal problem, to being a normal part of one's experience–even, in many cases, an important source of meaning and illumination. Writers for young adults are now making it possible for their readers to see the future butterfly beyond the cocoon, to see the existence of time capsules besides their own.

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HISTORY:

BRINGING IT TO LIFE THROUGH ADOLESCENT LITERATURE
(TWO ARTICLES)

Beyond the Divide: A Springboard for Discussion of Current Concerns of Young Adults

Christy Hammer
Lincoln, Nebraska

The struggle for independence has long been an integral part of the history of the world, not only for nations, but also for individual people. Historical fiction, which reflects this struggle, is an excellent vehicle for students to use to examine characters who may be struggling with a problem they themselves are facing–the struggle for independence.

Adolescence is a transitional stage from dependence to independence. In the desire and struggle for independence, many teenagers experience conflict, anger, feelings of guilt and a variety of other emotions directed not only at others, but also at themselves. How they interpret their own feelings and how they perceive others' reactions to them influence their actions and emotions.

Historical fiction acts as a mirror, reflecting adolescent characters with adolescent problems into historical settings. From the distance provided by a different time, today's students can examine the problems of the characters, and relate their resolutions to their own lives.

Although every student will bring different experiences to the novel and may react to it differently from their classmates, the sharing of their emotions, using historical fiction as a springboard for discussion, will help to assure them that their problems are not necessarily unique or unusual. Having an opportunity to discuss their feelings in relation to a literary work will help them look objectively at their own situations and clarify their own feelings.

In a study of the development of the West in United States history, the struggle for survival is often emphasized. As important, and closely related to survival, is the spirit of fierce independence exhibited by the people going West. Students can read many short stories to gain a feeling for the situations and emotions faced by these pioneers, mountain men, gold miners and settlers. These stories can also be used to develop students' skills in making simple lists, identifying conflicts, sequencing, identifying cause-effect relationships, and comparing and contrasting characters and situations. Short stories which lend themselves to the idea of independence and consequences include: "The Buffalo Dance" (C. Meigs), "God's Oddling" (J. Stuart), "Grasshoppers" (R.W. Lane), "John Colter's Race for Life" (E. McCall), "Oklahoma Land Run" (E. Ferber), "Gold Mounted Guns" (F.R. Buckley) and "The Gift of Cochise" (L. L' Amour).

By reading these short stories and viewing video tapes and films about the conflicts faced by people struggling for independence, students will develop critical reading skills by identifying reasons prompting people to settle in the West, problems or conflicts faced by these people, similarities and differences of the characters and differing points of view of characters.

Students can research any of the following topics to focus on the conflicts and struggle for independence of these individuals and groups: Jim Bridger, Mormons (Joseph Smith and Brigham Young), Jedidiah Smith, Donner Party, Cochise, Isabella Bird, fur traders, Jim Bowie, workers on the transcontinental railroad, Forty-Niners, John Colter, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Sacajawea, Lewis and Clark, Samuel Parker, Levi Strauss, Jenny Lind, Davy Crockett, pioneers on the Oregon Trail, Father Junipero Serra, Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Wyat Earp, miners, John Charles Fremont, Zebulon Pike or cowboys.

Many English teachers will not have an extensive amount of time to devote to library research. However, because the historical background of the times will enhance the students' understanding of the setting and the motivations of the characters in the novel, team teaching with a social studies teacher or teaching the novel when this period of history is being studied in social studies will be beneficial. The unit works especially well in a core or block program, integrating English and social studies in a two hour block of time. If an integrated approach is not possible, many historical novels are of sufficient merit to be studied as a single unit, with a minimum of study of the historical background of the novel.

Various activities based on the research can be done by students, utilizing the knowledge which they gained in the library, capitalizing on their individual learning styles. For example:

(1) Write a journal or diary of the character.
(2) Make a model (Alamo, a Spanish mission, a wagon, a fort, the Northern Mountains).
(3) Compose poems written by the person you have studied.
(4) Interview your character. (Assume he/she is visited by someone from our time (you), who conducts the interview.)

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(5) Write a report, pulling together the materials which you have found in all your sources.
(6) Write a short story from the point of view of a character who may have known the person you researched.
(7) Prepare part of a meal that pioneers may have served, and serve it to the class.
(8) Visit an old graveyard with markers from the 1800s; write a play including the cause of death and the funeral of one of the people buried there.
(9) Make a slide/tape, movie or videotape showing sections of the Oregon Trial, and make a map illustrating it.
(10) Make a newspaper revolving around the key elements you researched. Include several news articles, an editorial, a political cartoon and advertisements.
(11) Make your own candles or soap using the techniques of the pioneers.
(12) Write a time travel story in which you go back in time to change something that happened in that time period. Include details from your research in your story to make it seem more realistic.
(13) Locate songs from that time period. Play or sing the songs to the class. (This project relates especially to topics on cowboys, Jenny Lind or the Oregon Trail.)
(14) Dress in an outfit similar to one that your character would have worn. As that character, present an argument to the class on why you took the action you did.

All of these activities and research projects will culminate in the study of *Beyond the Divide* by Kathryn Lasky. A novel of a young girl and her father who leave their family and the Amish community because he is shunned, *Beyond the Divide* offers students many opportunities to examine characters, their motivations, conflicts, responsibilities and consequences of their actions. The novel raises many moral and ethical issues relevant during the development of the West and still important today. It is a novel which addresses the topics of survival and independence.

Meribah, the main character in the novel, is a distinct individual, and her individuality and independence grow throughout the novel. At first, she withholds her ideas, and they are revealed only to the reader. But, as she develops, she becomes more verbally expressive of her thoughts. Her character offers many topics for student discussion. She makes decisions, independent of the advice from others, faces the responsibility of those decisions and begins to look at situations through the viewpoints of many different characters.

Because Meribah and her father Will are from the Amish community, the culture and their use of language are vastly different from the other characters in the novel. The language, itself, offers students an interesting study. Meribah also expresses herself artistically. Her language, her artistic style, her relationships with others and her loyalty to her father and to her friend Serena, in spite of objections raised by others, all help to develop Meribah's character and her sense of independence.

The novel is set in the West. The chapters graphically depict environmental and interpersonal problems that the characters faced going West. However, the issues raised in the novel are not time specific; they are situations which involve decision making, independence of thought and action and responsibility for one's actions. The study of Meribah in *Beyond the Divide* raises many questions with which teenagers today are struggling. To become independent must a young person openly express his/her ideas to others, thus verbally committing him/herself? What emotions do teenagers experience when their parents are fighting? To whom does a teenager owe allegiance? What is a friend? What responsibility does a teenager have to openly state his/her beliefs? To what extent does a teenager need to care for his/her parents? What is murder? Why do people wear masks in their daily lives?

Beyond the Divide is a novel that offers students a springboard from which they can discuss their ideas and emotions, the historical period itself, dialects, similies and metaphors, character development and moral and ethical issues. This young adult novel is well-written and worthy of study. It also provides many topics for writing. Students can personalize the ideas in the novel to their own personal situations by writing on topics such as the following:

(1) Reread the poem "No Man is an Island." Think about whether you could live on your own. What traits do you have that would enable you to survive on your own?
(2) Many people need "personal space" in their lives. Explain the extent to which this is true for you, both physically and emotionally. Bring in specific examples to support what you are saying.
(3) Many people have a need to "mark the world." Meribah also wants to mark the world for Serena. What is it that you want to do to "mark the world"? How does this relate to your value system? How is your name part of your mark on the world?
(4) Meribah speaks of people wearing masks. What masks do you wear with different people? Why is it difficult to let people see your true self all of the time?
(5) Read Kahil Gibran's poem on parents and children. Write your reactions. Personalize it to your individual situation.
(6) "Meribah began to suspect that every journey had several starting points" (p. 36). Relate this statement to your own life, discussing the different starting points that you have had.
(7) The rape scene is not explicitly described; some of the reactions of others are subtly implied. Write some journal entries for one of the following characters to show their inner feelings about what happened that day and what had been happening since the incident: Serena Billings, Barbara Billings, Mr. Billings and Mr. Wickham.
(8) In many ways Meribah was brave, yet she also felt fear. Think of your own life and what you fear. Write about these fears and how you are, or are not able to cope with them.
(9) Six years have passed. Write a scenario portraying what has happened to Meribah since she left at the end of *Beyond the Divide*.

Role playing helps students identify with characters, plot and setting. De-briefing after the role playing is crucial, helping students relate the topic to their own experiences, discover how their actions affect others, examine a situation from another point of view, look at various ways of handling a situation and see that they are not the only ones facing the problem. Below are some suggested role-playing situations to use in conjunction with *Beyond the Divide*:

(1) Your friends are going out to a lake for the afternoon. They plan to lay on rafts, swim and picnic. Both of your parents are at work; you call your father to tell him about your plans. The day is rather windy; your father does not want you to go

on the water, although he does not forbid you from going to the lake. Role-play the conversation you have with him. Then role-play your telling your friends about your decision, whatever it is.

(2) On your birthday your parents have always taken you out to eat wherever you want to go. They plan to do the same this year; it has become a family tradition. Your friends want to treat you to a movie and have some more friends come over. You have to role-play how you are going to handle this situation with your friends and/or with your parents.

(3) Your grades have always been above average. You casually mention that you have a hard test in three days. That night you go over to a friend's house to watch a videotape. The next night you spend most of your time on the phone. You have practice after school every day, so you can't study until the evening. This is the night before the test. Several of your friends who are out riding their bikes stop by, talk for quite awhile and try to get you to go with them. Your mother reminds you that you have a test to study for. Role-play the situation with your parents and with your friends.

(4) You have been good in sports since you were in fourth grade, and you have spent a lot of time practicing. However, now you are *sick* of it and don't want to spend "all of your life" devoted to it. Your parents both want you to continue in that sport and to compete on varsity as a ninth grader. Role-play the situation with your parents. You may want to role-play your talking to a friend about the situation first.

(5) Your best friend is having a party. Your parents give you permission to go, but they say you must be home at 11:00. *Everyone* else gets to stay until 12:00. You are having a good time, the party is chaperoned, so you don't see anything wrong with staying longer, other than the fact that you have a curfew. You get home at 12:15. Role-play what happens when you get home.

(6) You have a friend who is *a lot* of fun, but your parents don't want you to be with this friend, who they think is a bad influence on you. You are being pulled two ways - this friend is *so* much fun, but your parents say they don't want you to do anything with the friend. Role-play what happens in the conversation between you and your parents.

(7) From doing odd jobs (babysitting, lawn work) you have some spending money of your own. You go shopping with friends and find a sweater you *just love*, but you don't have enough money with you to get it. After you get home you tell your parents about it and ask if one of them will take you to Gateway so that you can get it. When they get to the store and see the price of the sweater, they "freak out" and forbid you to waste your money on something that expensive. Role play the situation in the store.

(8) Both of your parents work and leave before you get up. They are trying to help you become more independent and to accept responsibility. They bought you an alarm clock so that you could get up and get yourself to school on time. They used to call to make sure that you were ready on time, but the last two weeks they have been letting you have full responsibility for getting yourself to school on time. You overslept once this week, and you were ten minutes late for class. Although you vowed to yourself that this would never happen again, you overslept again - and you were a half-hour late for school. This time the assistant principal called your parents. Role-play the situation with your parents after you get home from school.

(9) Your parents *hate* your hair style; they think it is too "punk." (They don't even know what punk is if they think your hair style is punk!) They want you not only to change your hair style, but also to "shape up" the way you dress. Role-play the discussion with your parents.

(10) You have a younger brother (age 6) and sister (age 4). In the past, your parents have hired a babysitter for all of you. However, considering that you are now going into the ninth grade, having a babysitter seems ridiculous - even if the babysitter is supposedly just for the two younger ones. You are considering offering to do this babysitting for the whole summer, if they will pay you. Role-play talking this over with your parents. Include salary, guidelines and expectations for both sides in your role-playing.

Reading historical fiction is appropriate for young adults. It not only helps them understand the time period, but it also universalizes the emotions and themes of the novel, helping students to understand that people who lived many years ago are not really so very different from people living today – from themselves. The historical novel can help students see that some ideas are indeed universal; they are not alone in their feelings, their struggles and their needs.

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Historical Fiction Starts with the Student

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At the mere mention of pursuing anything "historical," most young adults groan and moan - even beg for mercy. Clearly, effort and creativity is needed for English teachers to convince students of the adventure that awaits the reader of historical fiction.

Perhaps, some examples of how frequently in daily life we see fragments of historical writing will help: business reports reassuring the public of the longevity of the firm, advertisements comparing yesterday's and today's styles and fads, newspapers telling us of yesterday's events, diaries and letters relating previous activities, genealogies enhancing family pride and sense of belonging, patient histories aiding in a physician's diagnosis, minutes of clubs and committees providing proofs of past activities, lawyers citing the precedents of past cases and novels using historical facts to enhance our understanding of imaginary events, characters and plots.

Once an understanding of the intertwining of history and the student's everyday existence gains some ground, then the teacher might introduce a collection of short stories, novels, poems, biographies and other resources to further encourage involvement. There are different approaches to the study of historical fiction – regional, thematic or a combination of these.

In a regional approach, for example, one might select young adult novels with strong regional flavor. Kevin Major, in *Hold Fast* and other novels, writes of Newfoundland and its traditions as the setting for his books. Works by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, such as *The Bloody Country*, center on the time of the Revolutionary War and the area of the Middle Colonies. *Prairie Songs* by Pam Conrad deals with a young girl's life on the Nebraska prairie. *Leroy and the Old Man* by W.E. Butterworth focuses on the region of the Mississippi Delta, while dealing with a teenager coming to terms with a personal set of values. There are countless other authors who select an historical setting for their teenage characters. Local or regional historical writings may provide the springboard a teacher needs because they usually offer interesting content with which most students can identify. Ironically, however, local history is rarely understood by young people.

For example, the adolescent reader in the Southwest may view historical fiction as cowboys and Indians. Unfortunately, many adults also have stereotyped historical fiction of the Southwest. Most Texas students consider Texas history to begin and end with the Alamo, the movie usually, not Lon Tinkle's excellent book, *The Alamo*, and they seldom pursue good examples of Texas writing. Unless students have parents who are interested in Texana, or are Texana buffs themselves, they may not discover authors such as Larry McMurtry, Larry King, J. Frank Dobie, Jane Gilmore Rushing, Katherine Anne Porter, Elmer Kelton and Fred Gipson. Unfortunately, many teachers are equally unfamiliar with these and other authors who center their works on Texas. Not that long ago J. Frank Dobie developed a course at the University of Texas because he was told that there was no literature of Texas or the Southwest. It is frightening to think that students may assume that a script from "Dallas" is an example of a Southwestern work.

When using local or regional history as entry into historical writing, certain strategies are most effective:

(1) Center the unit around the students themselves, their backgrounds and their interests.
(2) Create a beginning bibliography of short stories, poems, novels and other resources to match the reading levels of the students.
(3) Adopt an approach - regional, thematic or a combination of both.
(4) Preview this unit with the students by helping them see history as an integral part of their everyday existence.
(5) Show the students maps and familiarize the class with the geographical aspects of the setting(s).
(6) Make use of local and state resources to expand your collection of historical fiction, and combine this information with oral history assignments.

A REGIONAL EXAMPLE

The teacher might begin by showing the class a Texas map; it is a big, diverse state. Most students have never crossed the entire state and are unaware of its regions. Allowing input of student backgrounds and travels can develop schema preparatory to beginning a Texas work. A regional approach makes this huge area more manageable and makes for a more authentic view of this mythical expanse. The state basically falls into five areas of literature: East, West, Gulf Coast, Valley and Urban. Although these areas have intermingled cultures and liquid borders, a regional look is a beginning step. Don Graham's *Texas: A Literary Portrait* contains an excellent regional approach to separating Texas historical literature from myth and includes an extensive bibliography as well.

Whether a younger reader views Texas through the pages of Edna Ferber's *Giant*, McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* or James Michener's *Texas* is not as important as the teacher presenting several choices at various reading levels. Like many others, Texas is a state of different cultures, geographies and literature. Students need to be introduced to these differences and encouraged to read about different sections of the state. Also, to make historical fiction more relevant the teacher needs to involve the class in the search for examples of historical writing, prose and poetry. Often local libraries, university collections, state historical commissions, Junior Historian clubs and museums are willing to help compile bibliographical listings. Local historical societies, writing groups, university and small press reviews and poetry clubs are also excellent sources of information. Typically, these groups can provide leads to interesting citizens (living histories) who can give an authentic flavor to historical study.

As the students become involved in the search, the addition of a unit on oral history, similar to the *Foxfire* experiment in

Appalachia, brings the class into local history and allows for follow-up writing and reading activities. As students become more aware of their own setting and of local history and characters, they can move beyond it to works of historical fiction from other regions.

THE THEMATIC APPROACH

The thematic approach appeals to teachers of very reluctant students because it centers on the students themselves. For example, the baseball fan or player is probably already an historian of sorts. He or she may often quote stats, names and team histories from years past, have a card collection and be ready to delve into a fictional work dealing with the sport in an historical setting. For example, *Hoopla* by Harry Stein, is the story of the Chicago "Black Sox" scandal, and its narrative draws students into an era of America's early fascination with baseball and sports heroes. This book is an excellent stepping stone to biographies of baseball players mentioned in the novel, to other baseball or sports novels, to a comparative reading of E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, to interviews with grandparents and neighbors for memories and opinions of an era gone by and to works dealing with the need for heroes in America, not the least of which is Paul Zindel's *Harry and Hortense at Hormone High*.

Another choice is to center your thematic unit around local interests. The mystique of the Southwest has lured writers of all genres and themes. Folklore abounds in Texas and the Southwest, and Zinita Fowler's *Ghost Stories of Old Texas* is a good source from which to begin a unit. Poetry is another source of regional flavor: Myra Livingston's *No Way of Knowing: Dallas Poems*, Carlotta Cardenas de Dwyer's *Chicano Voices* and Dave Philiphant's *The New Breed: An Anthology of Texas Poets*, are good examples. There are several excellent collections of short stories dealing with Texas and the Southwest: Max Apple's *Southwest Fiction*, Don Graham's *South By Southwest*, and Jose Griego Maestro and Rudolfo Anaya's *Cuentos: Tales from the Hispanic Southwest*. To gain a good historical perspective of Texas the teacher may want to read T.R. Fehrenbach's *Lone Star*; this work was the script source for the PBS series of the same name. Whatever genre is selected, or if a portion of each is tried, there are many good beginnings for the young adult reader of Southwestern literature.

The focus, then, is for students to learn to enjoy historical fiction by beginning with their interests and culture. The major challenge before the teacher is to present the past to adolescents who sometimes view only those events that have happened during their lifetime as important. An effective author of historical fiction writes history into palatable fiction, allowing adolescents to vicariously experience the people, values and events common to a particular time period.

They may understand, then, that historical writers are dealing with characters who are trying to struggle with and to make sense of their own particular worlds, much as the adolescent is confronting his or her own world. Young readers are afforded opportunities to view their own problems in a more global perspective and to realize alternatives to dealing with today's difficulties by understanding how they are addressed in the past. By identifying with characters and places of the past, the reluctance (even antagonism) associated with learning about the past begins to dissolve because it is discovered to be as alive as the moment.

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TO TELL THE TRUTH OR AT LEAST A LITTLE NONFICTION

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"These kids don't, won't, can't (choose your own negative verb) read." Thus goes the plaintive cry of teachers, not to mention public education's critics. Except for stalwart, hard core "good" students, credence can be given this sad refrain. Now comes the really big *but:* But only if we restrict our definition of *reading* to include only fiction, especially that certified as acceptable to teachers.

The fact is that nearly all students *do* read, maybe not the pages assigned last night, but they do read. They read the test, and maybe even the manual, for their driver's license. They read signs. (How many boys go into the girls' restroom – inadvertently?) They read specifications and instructions on boxes of auto parts. They read parts of newspapers such as "Dear Abby," sports items, comics and horoscopes. Yes, they read even *National Enquirer* and *Wrestling Insider*.

It is time we put an end to this pervasive myth about the inability of our students. And most certainly it is time we stopped advertising this untruth for our detractors. Just as successful coaches continually emphasize the importance of fundamentals and have their athletes regularly practice such basics as blocking in football, baton passing in relay races or keeping the ball in front of them in fielding a baseball, teachers need regularly to remind themselves of certain fundamentals of teaching. One such basic is this: Begin where the students are. It is analogous to the golfing rule: Play it as it lies (or lays, as most golfers say). In teaching there is no "winter rules" which permit improving a lie (ball position) before taking your best shot with a class. It is as simple as finding out what students can and do read and then figuring a way to include some of that in your plans.

A large portion of the reading material chosen by students is nonfiction. It is not uncommon to find in a check of library circulation records that from half to two-thirds of the books checked out by high school students are nonfiction. Further inquiry reveals that this circulation pattern occurs independently from classroom assignments. A count of books for adolescents in sources such as *School Library Journal* and *Booklist* reveals the same dominance of nonfiction over fiction. This leaning is to be found also in various editions of *Books for You*.

While most librarians/media specialists are not particularly surprised by these findings, most English teachers seem to be. Perhaps this is because most high school English teachers came into the profession as a direct result of their love of and concern for the artistic productions usually thought of as *literature*. To be sure, the position of *belles lettres* in the curriculum should be unchallenged, but there is much more to an English curriculum.

Parts of this article are based on a manuscript prepared by the author for the Georgia Department of Education.

More often than not, what students choose to read is what is generally called informational works, rather than the essays and biographies usually favored by teachers when they give their perfunctory nod to nonfiction. Addison, Steele, Franklin and others selected by anthology editors consistently cause students to nod. What needs to be done is to identify writings that students already read, note the topics of interest and find additional materials on these subjects.

The task then is to incorporate these reading materials into the English curriculum. This integration can be simple or extensive. Nonfiction can serve as the focus for a unit, or it can be but a part of other activities. For example, there could be a brief unit teaching students to evaluate nonfiction works, making them more aware and critical in their use of this material.

Another approach might be to include some works of nonfiction in activities which are already part of classroom routine. For instance, lists of books suggested for individual reading could include some nonfiction/informational titles. Works of nonfiction also fit easily into composition instruction, either as sources for research papers or as stimuli for compositions. This last suggestion is easily implemented by having students address such questions as these after reading an informational work:

- What are the implications for action on local, state or national levels?
- How can some of these ideas be carried out in our community?
- So that anyone might understand the process, describe a procedure that was presented.
- Explain one or more ideas that were new to you.

As with any change, whether it be in methods or materials, there is likely to be some reluctance on the part of some learners and professionals as well. Change suggests the unknown, which is always threatening, but it is necessary, unless we believe that a state of perfection already exists.

The introduction of nonfiction constitutes a relatively minor change which can be accomplished with a minimum of upset. First, the objectives are largely ones that are sought currently: the encouragement of reading, the development of critical readers, the broadening of information-gathering skills and many of the objectives in the composition curriculum, such as the development of research skills and of clarity of thought and expression. Secondly, the methods are basically the same. The major change is in the material used, and even this change can be softened by merely interspersing nonfiction with fiction.

Of course, care must be taken in selecting nonfiction materials. In general, most of the criteria pertinent to the selection of fiction apply also to nonfiction:

- *What is the readability level?* In nonfiction the use of jargon and technical language also may be a problem.

- *Is the material potentially interesting to any of the students?* Unless the work is intended for assignment to an entire class – an unlikely possibility, it need be of interest to only one student. This fact is one of the most desirable features of nonfiction in the English curriculum: it provides an easy avenue to individualiztion, often desired but too difficult to achieve. Remember, it does not have to be interesting to the teacher. Such a limitation would impose an unnecessary and unnatural restriction.

- *What is the quality of the writing?* Is it written in an appropriate and acceptable variety of English? Is the use of language adroit or distinctive?

Then there are some questions that are more specifically suited for the appraisal of nonfiction:

- *Is the material organized logically?* Does it help the reader locate information? Does it cover what it purports to cover?

- *Do the visuals (diagrams, charts, illustrations, photographs, etc.) aid in understanding the text?* Do they appear with the textual material they are intended to clarify? Do the visuals measure up to standards of good art? Are they clear and generally attractive?

- *Is the information accurate, authoritative, unbiased, up-to-date?* No one can be so well informed that these matters can be judged personally, but there are guides which may detect a fraud or a woefully deficient work. What are the author's credentials – either by education or experience? When was it written? Is this kind of information likely to be dated? Is there any supporting evidence for assertions?

Since it is impossible to be personally familiar with all nonfiction that may be valuable to students, some help is needed in identifying works worthy of use. Fortunately, there are a number of resources available to teachers. First, the school librarian/media specialist usually has considerable first-hand knowledge. Librarians/media specialists know what is available, what students are interested in, what reviewers have said and often have at least skimmed a great many books. Then there are a number of professional publications which list and sometimes annotate books, including nonfiction. Here are a few such references:

- *Booklist*. The American Library Association. 50 E. Huron St. Chicago, IL.

- *Books for You: A Booklist for Senior High Students*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd. Urbana, IL.

- *High Interest/Easy Reading for Junior and Senior High School Students*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd. Urbana, IL.

- *School Library Journal*. R.R. Bowker Co., 1180 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY.

- *Your Reading: A Booklist for Junior High Schools*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd. Urbana, IL.

There are a number of good reasons why nonfiction ought to be included in the English curriculum. First, like the mountain, it is there. Totally ignoring such a considerable body of writing is too ostrich-like to be reasonable. Besides, there is much nonfiction which is good, both in the sense of being interesting and in the fact of being well written. Perhaps most important is the fact that it is the reading material of choice for a great many students.

Here are some sample lessons I have found useful. While adaptations of each of these lessons might be used with students of any ability level, the recommendations for level of use might be considered reasonable starting points.

LESSON A

Students: Above average

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to list criteria for selecting nonfiction.
2. Students will be able to apply criteria in appraising nonfiction.

Procedures:

1. Present students with a list of criteria for critically appraising nonfiction. This may be done by handout, overhead projection or chalkboard. As each criterion is presented, give two examples – one positive and one negative – from works of nonfiction.
   A. Accuracy (authoritative, unbiased, up-to-date)
      - Who is the author? What are the author's credentials (experience, education)? Check title page, preface/forward/introduction.
      - When was it written? Is this kind of information likely to be dated?
      - Are assertions supported by valid evidence?

   B. Organization
      - Is there a logical organization? Does it help the reader locate information? Check the table of contents.
      - Is there an index, if one is needed? Is it accurate? Check several topics by going to the indicated pages.
      - Does the book cover what it purports to cover? Compare the contents with the title and any blurbs or introductory statements.

   C. Quality of Writing
      - Is the use of language adroit or distinctive in any way? Does it read easily?
      - Is it written on a level appropriate for the intended reader? Is there unnecessary use of technical language or jargon? Is the tone condescending?

   D. Quality of Visuals (diagrams, charts, maps, illustrations, photographs, etc.)
      - Do the visuals appear with the textual material they are intended to clarify? Are they a page or two away? Are they all collected in one section of the book?
      - Are photographs in focus? Is color reproduction of high quality? (Note: Color is not required: black and white photographs may be of high quality, too.)
      - Do the visuals measure up to standards of good art? Are they

clear and generally attractive?

2. Give the class these instructions:
   a. You will be working in small groups.
   b. Each group will be given some books to evaluate.
   c. Each member of the group is to assess each book individually. Then group members will compare their findings and resolve any differences.
   d. Each group is to be ready to give a report to the rest of the class. This report is to consist of telling the rest of the class about each book's strengths and weaknesses. If the number of books equals the number of students in the group, each student will be able to make a part of the report.
3. Divide the class into groups of five or six students each. Give each group four to six nonfiction books to evaluate. Be sure that each group has at least two books that are of high quality and two that are poorly done.
4. Walk among the groups keeping students on task and answering questions.
5. While still seated in groups, students present the group reports.

Materials:

1. Content notes ready for presentation in chosen mode – Transparency, handout or chalkboard.
2. Nonfiction books as follows:
   a. Approximately as many books as there are students.
   b. Include at least twice as many positive examples as there will be groups. Same for negative examples. The remainder may be somewhere in between or at either extreme.

Evaluation:

1. The primary means of assessing student learning can be done by comparing student reports with assessments made by the teacher.
2. If it is deemed necessary, more formal procedures may be used:
   a. Having students list the four criteria for evaluating nonfiction, with a required number of supporting questions for each (two for instance).
   b. Have each student write a formal evaluation of one or two nonfiction books.

LESSON B

Students: Average

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify concepts in works of nonfiction.
2. Students will be able to apply concepts in works of nonfiction to their own lives or to their community.

Procedures:

1. Give the class a brief overview of each of five or six nonfiction books. (These must be selected so that each will have relevance to the lives of the students or their community.)
2. Allowing for student preferences for the topics of the various books, divide the class into groups for the purpose of reading one of the books. Each student in a group is to read that group's book.
3. After students have had an opportunity to read the books (perhaps one week after the assignment was made), have the students work in their book groups to identify an idea/issue (concept) in the book with which they have an opinion, feeling and/or experience.
4. Assign each group to address its idea/issue in one of the following ways:
   a. Develop a questionnaire and administer it to some identifiable group, either within the school or in the community, to determine attitudes/opinions on the subject. Submit a written report to the teacher and an oral report to the class on the group's findings.
   b. Set up and conduct interviews with key people (mayor, city council members, county commissioners, business leaders, school officials, local government department heads, etc.) on the selected topic. The same kinds of oral and written reports are to be done.
   c. Rather than reaching out to other people, the group may choose to do further reading to prepare for the reports. In this case, each student should read a minimum of one additional nonfiction book.
   NOTE: Such reports could serve as the basis for articles in either the school or local newspapers.

Materials:

1. Five or six nonfiction books selected for the relevance of their content to the lives of students.
2. Overviews of the selected nonfiction books.

Evaluation:

Student performance can be assessed by the means generally employed for the appraisal of group reports and individual participation in the groups.

LESSON C

Students: Below Average

Objectives:

1. Students will comprehend concepts in nonfiction material.
2. Students will be able to apply concepts in nonfiction material to their own lives.

Procedures:

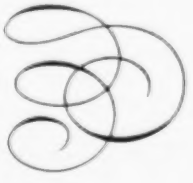
1. Engage students in a discussion of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and other informational materials they have read. Help them come to see that they have already been gaining information from their reading.
2. Assign the students to find an article which presents an idea on a subject of their choice. The idea should be one on how to do something better than, or at least differently from a familiar practice.
   NOTE: This can be accomplished during class either by bringing many materials to class and having students bring some from home or by taking the class to the library (media center, etc.).
   Some materials that work well are magazines like *Farm Journal* , *Popular Mechanics* and *Family Circle* or pamphlets and brochures from the County Extension Office or newspaper columns on specific topics such as gardening or cooking.
3. After students have found, read and understood the article and the idea (concept), assign a paper in which they are to explain why that idea would (or would not) work in their situation. An oral report to the class is another possibility.

Materials:

1. Magazines and journals
2. Brochures and pamphlets
3. Newspapers

Evaluation:

Student performance can be assessed by the means generally employed for the appraisal of written or oral reports.



YA BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM

BRIDGING THE BASICS: THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL IN A BACK-TO-BASICS SOCIETY

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The national concern for excellence in education is being interpreted by many professionals involved with high school literature as a return to the past – the classics, the books our parents read, standardized lists. A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, assembled by Terrell Bell, US Secretary of Education), for example, calls for an English curriculum which would familiarize students with our literary heritage as well as equip students to read, write, listen and discuss effectively. A survey of English teachers found that many believe that part of their role as teachers is to expose students to great works of literature in the English language (Samuels, 1982).

While we hear these calls for a more stringent curriculum, all of us are struggling with students who are neither mentally nor emotionally prepared to tackle the classics: the ones who say, "*Great Expectations*, I hated it! It was boring with all that description, those coincidences and the old English background. I didn't finish it. I read the CLIFF notes." Clearly *Great Expectations* presents challenges that some of our students may not be prepared to accept. Teachers report that a less restrictive curriculum might better meet the needs of some of their students, but that they are faced with conflicting pressures. Our classes are often filled with students who are neither cognitively nor affectively prepared for sophisticated adult literature, and who cannot and do not read the classics we assign. Yet we feel that we must or that we want to expose these students to the masterpieces of literature. What can we do? Can we meet the demands of a back-to-basics society and respond to the interests and developmental needs of adolescents?

To help students discover a true experience and interaction with books at their developmental level and to enable them to understand the craft of fiction in such a way that they are better able to read and comprehend the message and the literary mode of the classics, we can expose them to young adult novels. Robert Small (1977), suggested that students can experience success studying an adolescent novel for aspects of the art of the novel as preparation for reading more adult novels in the future.

> *If you were, for example, trying to teach a child how a jet or an automobile engine works, it surely would be better not to use the engines of a 747 or the most advanced racing cars. Their size, complexity, and refinement would make them poor starting places for the beginner. You would, instead probably want to start with a simple jet engine, a combustion engine with a single cylinder. In other words, you would use a working model so that the number of parts and the size would help, rather than interfere, with making its workings completely clear. The working model of the mature piece of literature is the junior adolescent novel.*

Experience with a number of young adult novels can provide the tools teens need to prepare them for more complex classics. Adolescent novels can be used to teach the literary conventions in preparation for reading the classics or as parallels to help young adult readers understand specific classics.

To teach students about characterization, some exciting novels by Kathryn Lasky are appealing to teens while providing opportunities to study strong-willed, well-rounded characters. A Lasky novel with a strong female protagonist, *Beyond The Divide*, introduces a teen, torn by conflicting loyalties, who is forced to make some important value decisions. The story beings in 1848; Meribah's father has been shunned by the Amish community in Pennsylvania in which they live. Meribah thinks her mother and the rest of the community are wrong, unfair in refusing to talk to her father. She decides to leave home and join her father on a wagon train to the Gold Rush west. Lasky clearly details the difficult and dangerous life of those who traveled west in covered wagons. On the trip, Meribah's best friend is raped and the wagon train community shuns the victim of rape much as the Amish community had shunned Meribah's father. Meribah tries to sort out her feelings as she discusses the situation with her father.

> *"Well, tell me this then: What is happening now? Why does Mr. Billings drink all the milk for Serena and her mother? Why won't Mr. Wickham even speak her name? Why are the Whitings forgiving me for walking with her? Why is Serena 'her' and 'she' and Mr. Wickman still 'Mr. Wickham'? Why are the Timms never mentioned and Serena, the victim, is judged? Why? Why? Why?"*
>
> *"Why is an old lady thrown out by the road to die?*

Why, Meribah? I don't know why. I just don't know....Meribah,...there are no answers. There are only questions. If thou wants easy answers, they are in Holly Springs."

The parallels are strong between the two incidents of shunning. Again, Meribah recognizes the hypocricy and selfrighteousness of the group. She makes a moral decision not to abandon her friend. Through her decisions, her thoughts, her actions, her words and the actions and words of those around her, we come to know and admire this unusual young lady. Lasky is indeed a master of creating an interesting and strong female main character.

In *Prank*, Lasky presents Birdie Flynn, daughter of an Irish, blue collar, uneducated Bostonian, in a contemporary conflict that relates to a teen's struggle to rise above the failures of her violence-torn family. Specifically, she is torn apart by the problems of her older brother Timmy, a 17-year-old loser. Driven by a need to prove himself, Timmy desecrates a synagogue and is caught. Birdie is not always strong. She get angry with Timmy, frustrated with her family, drifts aimlessly at times, but she is able to rise above her situation and hope for the future.

Prank ofers a wonderful opportunity to teach symbolism. The violence of the lower class East Boston community is separated in *Prank* by water and lifestyle from the glitter of downtown Boston. The descriptions of setting thus establish the framework for the story. The symbolism of the two sides of the water is strong. Timmy finally is rescued from a continuation of his downward slide into nowhere when he gets a job on a tug boat, working on the water that separates him from upward mobility. Birdie, too, ends up working in Boston, first at Filene's Department Store and later at the newspaper. The chipped Madonna sitting in the weed strewn front yard of the Flynn's is an obvious symbol of the imperfect understanding and religious faith of Mrs. Flynn and the Flynns of the world. It is a symbol teens can understand. It can help them cope with the concept of symbolism in more difficult classic novels.

Is there a better example of the novel as form than the literary works of Robert Cormier? *The Chocolate War*, the story of a student in a Jesuit high school who refuses to sell chocolates when everyone else is cooperating, is a part of many school curricula. The novel's stark realism, its fast moving action and its theme of individualism in the face of overwhelming institutional evil have made it a favorite amongst teachers. Cormier is a master at drawing young people into the book from the first famous line, "They murdered him" and maintaining tension and interest until the final page. Recently Cormier wrote the sequel, *Beyond The Chocolate War*, which answers the questions of those who agonized over what happened to Jerry Renault. Another novel in which individuals face an institutional threat, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* is a complex work about hope in an experimental hospital for terminally ill teenagers. As in all Cormier's books, the action begins in the first lines. In *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, as in his other finely crafted novels, clues and threads of information foreshadowing the conclusion are apparent from the beginning, but not until the climax does Cormier expose the secret of the book, and the symbols and images of cars, bumblebees and hope come together.

A bumblebee isn't supposed to fly. The law of

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> *aerodynamics or something...But know what? The bumblebee doesn't know about the laws of aerodynamics. So it goes ahead and flies, anyway. And, they say, manages to make a little honey every day.*

These books are powerful in their first reading, wonderful teaching tools for issues of plot structure, theme and symbolism in subsequent, more analytic study.

In addition to helping students learn the craft of fiction by studying plot structures, theme, characterization, symbolism and setting in adolescent novels, one of the ways young adult novels serve an important function is as a bridge, helping inexperienced readers learn the workings of literature by grouping some specific young adult novels with specific classics. A variety of young adult books, for example, may help the contemporary teen to comprehend *The Scarlet Letter*. Although we would all agree *The Scarlet Letter* is a great piece of fiction, it is not easily accessible to the typical high school reader. Teens struggle with it for many reasons, apart from issues of sentence structure and vocabulary. It is difficult to understand the background of the Puritan mind as well as the conflict Hawthorne explores. Many of the novel's themes are difficult for young readers to comprehend: suffering purifies; there are moral consequences to a sexual relationship; guilt becomes overpowering and physical in form, and vengeance can rule one's life. In terms of style, the symbolism and use of setting as an emotional participant in the action also make the book a struggle.

Elizabeth Speare's Newbery Award novel, *The Witch Of Blackbird Pond*, can help the teen begin to understand the Puritan background of Hawthorne's classic. Speare's book is the story of a young girl from Barbados who moves to Puritan Connecticut and is confounded by the restrictive and suspicious atmosphere, not unlike the atmosphere found in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Another young adult novel presents some of the basic story line of *The Scarlet Letter* in modern terms, although it lacks the depth and texture of a classic. John Neufeld's *Sharelle* is the story of an innocent, very naive 14-year-old who gets pregnant in a moment of weakness when she desperately needs some affection. Although Sharelle's story is very different from the story in *The Scarlett Letter*, it is also very similar. Like Hester Prynne, she refuses to reveal the name of the baby's father. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, the reader knows the identity of the baby's father early in the novel and shares Sharelle's conflict about revealing his identity. Like Hester, Sharelle's experience as a young mother makes her more wise, passionate and understanding. As suffering purifies Hester, Sharelle too grows in compassion and insight. At the end, Sharelle makes the momentous decision that for the sake of herself and the baby she loves, she must give the baby up for adoption. Through that decision Sharelle grows up. Discussion and analysis of *Sharelle* and its relationship to *The Scarlet Letter* will help sharpen students' critical reading skills and lead to a better understanding of both books.

The Scarlet Letter is a novel in which the setting is an active participant, an integral part of the plot, reflecting moods, emotions and serving in a symbolic relationship with Pearl. Chapter one, for example, introduces the ugliness and gloominess of the wooden jail with "weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front." Yet, next to the door is a rose bush. Later in the book Pearl compares herself to the rose. In *The Scarlet Letter*, meteors burn A's in the sky as signals to those on earth. This use of setting as symbolic is also apparent in some young adult titles. *Z For Zaccariah*, by Robert O'Brien, a science fiction novel which seems as far from *The Scarlet Letter* as one can travel, also has a setting that seems to reflect what is happening in the novel. *Z For Zaccariah* takes place after a nuclear bomb has destroyed all life except one peaceful valley where Anne Burden is the only living person. This valley becomes its own enemy as a man comes to destroy the serenity of its quiet existence.

Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* provides an excellent opportunity for students to study the abstract concept of guilt. At one point in the story, Mr. Pignati has Lorraine and John list levels of guilt in the imaginary death of a woman. Each of the characters in this game is a symbol, and they thus reveal what is important in the lives of those playing the game. Right after the discussion of guilt in the game, Mr. Pignati has a heart attack while roller skating with the young people. Guilt hangs heavily in the air. Discussions of guilt in *The Pigman* can serve as an excellent prelude to discussions of guilt in *The Scarlet Letter*. Another more recent book, Paula Fox's novel *One-Eyed Cat*, also explores the issue of guilt. The story deals with a young boy who is obsessed by the thought that he might have injured a cat. It, too, might be part of a thematic unit studied with *The Pigman* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

Many other fine young adult novels can be paired with classics to help students understand and apply a variety of literary tools. The episodic plot line of *Grapes Of Wrath* might be better understood after studying *Home Before Dark* (Sue Ellen Bridgers), *Homecoming* (Cynthia Voigt) and *Words By Heart* (Ouida Sebestyen). In addition, all three of these young adult novels explore issues of home and place that are interesting to compare with similar themes in *Grapes Of Wrath*. Robert Cormier, Paul Zindel, and Alice Childress are young adult authors who have written books with multiple points of view. Having become familiar with the literary tool of point of view, a teenage reader is more likely to understand F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of a detached observer as a narrator of *The Great Gatsby*. Leon Garfield's *The Sound Of Coaches* would help the less sophisticated reader understand the setting of Dickens's England, while *Is That You, Miss Blue* (M.E. Kerr) and *Jacob Have I Loved* (Katherine Paterson) might help prepare students for *Great Expectations*. These young adult books, like *Great Expectations*, present isolated characters within a setting that is a significant part of the novel. Like Tess in Hardy's *Tess Of The D'Urbervilles*, Ellen in *Claws Of A Young Century* and Mary, Queen of Scotts in Mollie Hunter's *You Never Knew Her As I Did* are strong female characters who experience defeat. All three of these women are fighting in societies that are not accepting of change and, therefore, make interesting comparisons. A study of *Animal Farm* might be accompanied by discussion of Glendon Swartout's *Bless The Beasts And The Children*.

The concept of pairing literature according to thematic or structural similarities is not new. What we propose, however, are some ideas for drawing students into more difficult classics using adolescent novels as a bridge or parallel. Perhaps in this way teachers can resolve the conflict between classics and the interests and developmental needs of our students. Young adult novels do have an important function in our back-to-basics curricula.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARACTER, WRITER AND READER:

ALAN AWARD WINNER

AN INTERVIEW WITH MADELINE L'ENGLE

Judith Bugniazet
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina

Around 1968, when I was in my adolescence, my sister tried to get me to read *A Wrinkle In Time*. I refused, basing my refusal on the fact that my sister was younger and I did not read anything but adult books. Because of this, it was almost ten years later that I discovered Madeline L'Engle. My little sister was right; L'Engle's novels are really ageless. They are not written for adolescents, but for everyone. She writes about the human experience: about love, values, work, death, pain and growing up (something we do every day of our lives).

L'Engle makes her characters come to life, touching the reader's life. Through her books the reader comes to know L'Engle, not only as an author but as a person. Because we sense that she knows us and we know her, reading her books is a very personal experience. As an avid reader of L'Engle's books, I have formed a personal relationship with her. Therefore, interviewing her was an experience I will always cherish and remember.

Q. *The Small Rain* is continued by *A Severed Wasp*, 37 years later. Was there anything autobiographical about these books?

A. Everything anyone writes is always autobiographical, no matter how far from your actual life it is. *The Small Rain* was, more or less, my attitude toward my work. Although Katherine's life was very different than mine, her attitude toward life was the same. I also knew when I wrote it that I'd have to know what eventually happened to her. I also knew that I had to grow up myself to find out. (Katherine in *A Severed Wasp* is in her 80s.)

Q. You retain a story-line over many years in your series. For example: *The Small Rain* and *A Severed Wasp*, "The Austins" series and the "Time Trilogy" and related books go through several generations. Do you chart your characters when you do this, or do you remember them all?

A. I could never chart my characters. There is a chart by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, but it was charted by somebody else, not by me. I remember my characters, and sometimes I make mistakes. Correct chronology doesn't bother me. In *A Severed Wasp* there were characters from *The Small Rain*, *A Ring of Endless Light*, *The Young Unicorns* and *Both Were Young*. I like to know what happens to people. I have a lot of fun with cross characterization between my books.

Q. Do you review past books before you begin writing another?

A. I wish I had time to go back and read my own books. No I don't review my books before writing another.

Q. This is quoted from Paul's letter to the Romans and out of *A Severed Wasp*: "For we glory in tribulation, knowing that from tribulation comes patience, and from patience comes experience, and from experience comes hope." This statement seems to be a tribute to the strength of women. Many of the women in your books are strong. Who would you say was your strongest woman character, and why?

A. I think they're all strong. I feel it's my duty to portray women as strong. My heritage is a past of strong women. I come from a family of very, very strong women. When I grew up women did what they wanted to whether it was popular or not. It's a tradition that goes back many generations. My friends all my life have worked, and I've always worked. One of my best friends is the head of a major medical center in a major city and she's a very strong woman.

Q. Who is your favorite character and why?

A. Asking that is like asking who my favorite child is. I like them all. I don't have a favorite character. The main character is the one I identify with in all of my books.

Q. Did you invent the concept of tessering (*A Wrinkle In Time*), and does it have a scientific basis?

A. Tessering does have a scientific basis. I discovered it as a concept by reading a short article in a scientific magazine. I then began doing research on it.

Q. Would you call your "Time Trilogy" science fiction or fantasy?

A. Both. Science fiction doesn't have to be separate from fantasy. Science itself is fantastic. Some science is so wild that it takes someone with a lot of imagination to write about it. The "Time Trilogy" is definately science, but it's fantasy too.

Q. Where did you get the name echthroi, and what does it mean? ("Time Trilogy")

A. Echthroi means enemy. I got the word from a friend who's a Greek Scholar. I asked him for a word that was indicative of evil, and echthroi sounds evil, and it was perfect for my purpose.

Q. Do you have any science background?

A. No. All my background is in the arts. In fact, the type of science I'm interested in, like quantum theory, time travel and Einstein's theories, wasn't even taught when I was in school. All my background in science is self-taught.

Q. Do you do your own research, or have someone do it for you?

A. I do my own research, and then have someone check it to make sure it's right.

Q. Did any one author especially influence your work?

A. H.G. Wells, George MacDonald, Marlowe, Ella Montgomery and many others. They all had a fantastic way of looking at life.

Q. Where in chronos (clock time) are most of your adolescent novels set?

A. They're all set for now. I try not to set the time so they will be current with whenever they're read.

Q. What about when Dr. Louise ("Time Trilogy") speaks of the first moon landing as being in her childhood?

A. (laughs) That was a mistake on my part. I never should have done that.

Q. Is Dr. Louise based on your friend who's head of the major medical center?

A. Probably so, although I didn't realize I had done that. They're different too, Dr. Louise is small and my friend is tall and lank, like me.

Q. Do you have any special relationship with the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, which plays so prominent a part in *The Young Unicorns* and *A Severed Wasp*?

A. Yes, I do. When you're a writer and your husband's an actor, trying to write in the bedroom is hard, so I went over to St. John the Devine's library one day to work. The librarian was called out to jury duty and had to leave. I offered to watch the library, and he never came back. I offered to watch the library from then on whenever I wasn't off doing lectures. That's where I write, often, when I'm in New York. For *The Young Unicorns* I explored every part of the cathedral, sometimes crawling on hands and knees. I like to put my imaginary people in a real setting. That's a known setting. I crawled all over that place and know it very well.

Q. When you wrote *Meet The Austins* and *A Wrinkle In Time*, did you intend to have the characters meet someday?

A. No, it never occured to me. It began with *Dragons In The Water* and it was so much fun that I decided to have my characters meet more often and know more about them.

Q. Which character do you identify with the most?

A. I identify with all of them. Mostly the protagonists: Meg, Polly, Vicky, etc. Not the mothers. Many people ask me if I'm the mother in the story, but I don't feel like the mother. I wish I was, but I feel more like the protagonist. The protagonist is more fun.

Q. In *The Moon By Night* Vicky's family travels across America, and Vicky writes about it. Did you do this as a young mother?

A. Yes. We did this moving from Connecticut to New York City and felt the change would be a real culture shock for the children. So we decided to take a trip across America first. We stopped at the places Vicky writes about in *The Moon By Night*. It was hard to keep this book from reading too much like a journal, rather than a story. I get lots of mail and comments from people saying that they really identify with this book because they did the same thing.

Q. You describe Cyprian, the bulldog (*Young Unicorns*), with all the endearing habits that bulldogs have (scratching a rug into an uncomfortable lump with which he lowered himself with contented gruntings). Have you ever owned a bulldog?

A. No, but when I first went to New York, in college, a man in our building had a bulldog that I used to walk. I am very fond of bulldogs. They're so sweet, like a puff-ball, and people will cross the street to get away from them.

Q. *A Ring of Endless Light* is a book about life and death. It's beautiful, insightful and philosophical. What were you hoping to make young adults feel about life and death with this book?

A. A lot of people avoid dealing with death, and I feel it's as natural as living. Parents tend to protect their children from dealing with death and children protect their parents. Children don't feel like they need to protect their grandparents though, so there's a line of communication there that isn't there between parents and children. Grandchildren can talk to grandparents about things that they don't talk to their parents about. Even in my case, my grandchildren tell me things that they don't tell their mother.

Q. Zachary Gray is so well characterized that I can visualize him and also see him in so many other spoiled, but really tragic young adults. Did you know someone that you patterned Zachary after?

A. Oh, I think everybody knew a Zachary Gray at one time or another. I did. I get a lot of mail from people saying that I've got to redeem Zachary, and I think they're probably right. If I redeem him, though, it will have to be in a fantasy. Real Zacharys usually kill themselves either intentionally or by mistake, usually by mistake.

Q. I loved *Many Waters*, had you always planned on continuing with the "Time Trilogy"?

A. No, and I don't see it as a continuation of the "Time Trilogy." I needed to write a story about Sandy and Denys and realized this when I wrote *A Wrinkle In time*, but I had a hard time finding a setting for them. I came across the setting when I was at a writer's convention in California, the desert. I

was working on a novel at the time, and when I came back from California I had writer's block. I never have writer's block! I was astounded by this, and I realized that I had to write the story about Sandy and Denys in order to get rid of the writer's block. I was wondering what had happened to Sandy and Denys, and will have to find out what happened to Charles Wallace sooner or later, but I haven't found out yet.

Q. The nephilim are fallen angels and the seraphim are angels. Did you make up these names, or are they Biblical?

A. They're Biblical. There's a story in the Bible about the seraphim and nephilim and I was curious about who they were, so I wrote about them.

Q. Which book do you consider to be your best? Is this also your favorite?

A. That's like asking who my favorite child is! I like all of them. *A Wrinkle In Time* is special because it was rejected by literally everyone before it was published. One of the problems with it was the publishing companies wanted to know who it was written for. I would say "Well- people, of course, what's wrong with writing for people?" I don't have a favorite book, but *A Wrinkle In Time* is special. Now my publishers let me write anything I want, it's wonderful!

Q. When you write an adolescent book do your publishers term it adolescent, or do you determine that?

A. Oh, we sort of mutually agree. I think the young adult novel is a non-existent term. In the past books that are now considered to be adolescent were written for adults. I never write with an age group in mind. I just write the book.

Q. Do you have anything that you would specifically like to say to the readers of the *ALAN Review*?

A. I think it's important for anyone who wants to write to know that when you write, you write, you don't think. That doesn't mean I don't do research, but when I actually write, I just write. If you think about it too much you get writer's block, or you just can't write. It's an art on the other side of thought. You've gone through the thought process and you're now on the other side. Writing is neither feeling nor thinking; it's more a listening. When you're really listening to someone you're in your own world to the exclusion of the rest of the world. This ability to exclude the world and create is the most necessary part of being a writer.

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The Small Rain. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1945.

A Swiftly Tilting Planet. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978. ISBN: 0-374-37362-0

The Moon By Night. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.

A Ring of Endless Light. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980. ISBN: 0-374-36299-8

A Wind in the Door. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973. ISBN: 0-374-38443-6

The Young Unicorns. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968. ISBN: 0-374-38778-8

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NEW AWARD WINNERS

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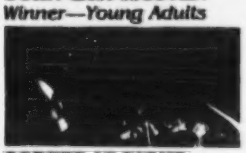
THE CAP. *1986 ALA Winner—Children*

AN OUNCE OF CURE. *1986 ALA Winner —Young Adults*

JOHN CAT. *1986 ALA Winner—Young Adults*



CORNET AT NIGHT. *1986 ALA Winner —Children*

CAGES. *1986 Blue Ribbon*

BAMBINGER. *1986 Red Ribbon*

NONFICTION: NEWS FROM ALAN AND BEYOND

News from ALAN

New ALAN officers and directors were announced at the annual ALAN breakfast at the NCTE Convention in San Antonio, TX on November 22, 1986. The new officers are: C. Anne Webb, President-Elect; Beth Nelms, Secretary; Ken Donelson, Alleen Nilsen and Bob Probst, Directors.

The ALAN Award was presented at the ALAN breakfast to author Madeleine L'Engle for her significant contribution to the field of young adult literature. She was cited for her continuing authorship of classic young adult books, including: *A Wrinkle in Time, The Arm of the Starfish, The Young Unicorns* and *A Ring of Endless Light*.

The annual ALAN workshop was held on November 24-25, 1986 at the San Antonio Marriott. Over 250 participants heard a dozen authors, highlighted by Maureen Daly, and 15 educators discuss issues related to adolescents and their literature. Out-going President Hazel Davis chaired this very successful event.

NCTE Convention News

Several resolutions of interest to ALAN members were passed during the NCTE annual business meeting on November 23, 1986 in San Antonio, TX. They include:

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn any attempts to render invisible the native languages of any Americans or to deprive English of the rich influences of the languages and cultures of any of the peoples of America. . .

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English oppose all policies that mandate or officially endorse instructional approaches, specify reading and vocabulary lists, and require reading and writing assignments that amount to accumulating numbers rather than giving students valid language experiences. . .

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English strongly urge publishers (1) to recognize that the English profession represents a distinct market which needs the continuing availability of materials of all cultures in order to expose students to the whole literary and language heritage of our society and (2) to join NCTE to find ways of providing these vital materials.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English identify and make available information about literature and classroom activities which provide students opportunities to read, write, talk and think about living in the world and about the tradition of creativity which inspires and enables human beings to continue the struggle to create and maintain peace and life with dignity. . .

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English commend and support the action of the Board of Directors to oppose the repressive system of apartheid in South Africa and to hold no investments in any firm doing business in South Africa. . .

An Ending and a Beginning

The final issue of *The Advocate*, a fine journal on children's literature published at the University of Georgia, arrived in the mail this fall. Though the organization is still active advocating fine literature for children, the journal is no more. In its place is a much shorter newsletter.

Within days of receiving the last issue of *The Advocate* a new journal arrived in the mail, *The Five Owls*. The name of the journal, published in Minneapolis, MN, is borrowed from Anne Carroll Moore's column on children's books which appeared in the *Herald Tribune* prior to the depression and *The Horn Book* from 1936 through 1961. The column became known for its readability and promotion of children's books with integrity. The new journal which has added two owls to its title, representing editor and designer (Moore's column was called "The Three Owls," standing for author,

By the 1985 Newbery Honor author of
The Moves Make the Man

Midnight Hour Encores

Bruce Brooks

"In *The Moves Make the Man* Brooks used basketball. . . as a vehicle for unforgettably vivid writing; here he uses music for similar purposes. Although Sib [a 16-year-old musical prodigy] has not seen her mother since the day she was born, she suddenly announces that she'd like to. Her father [then] takes her on a trip both actual and figurative, across the country, and back 15 years [as he recalls] the spirit that captured her mother and him during the 1960s. . . .Brooks is a genuine storyteller, with fine dramatic sense and excellent comic timing. Like *Moves*, this is full of memorable scenes and magic moments, especially when music is being played or heard. . . .A stimulating thought-provoking tale."—(Starred review) *School Library Journal*

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artist and critic), intends to continue Moore's tradition of featuring only those children's books which are not only high in literary and artistic quality, but are likely to interest their audience. *The Five Owls* is published six times per year at a subscription price of $18. Write: Subscription Department, *The Five Owls*, 2004 Sheridan Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55405.

News from Publishers

Little, Brown and Company announced that it has acquired the Children's book program of the Atlantic Monthly Press. Under this new agreement, Melanie Kroupa, editor of the Atlantic's children's list since 1977, and her staff will move to the Little, Brown offices in Boston and continue to publish her list of books for young readers. Their new address is: 34 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02106.

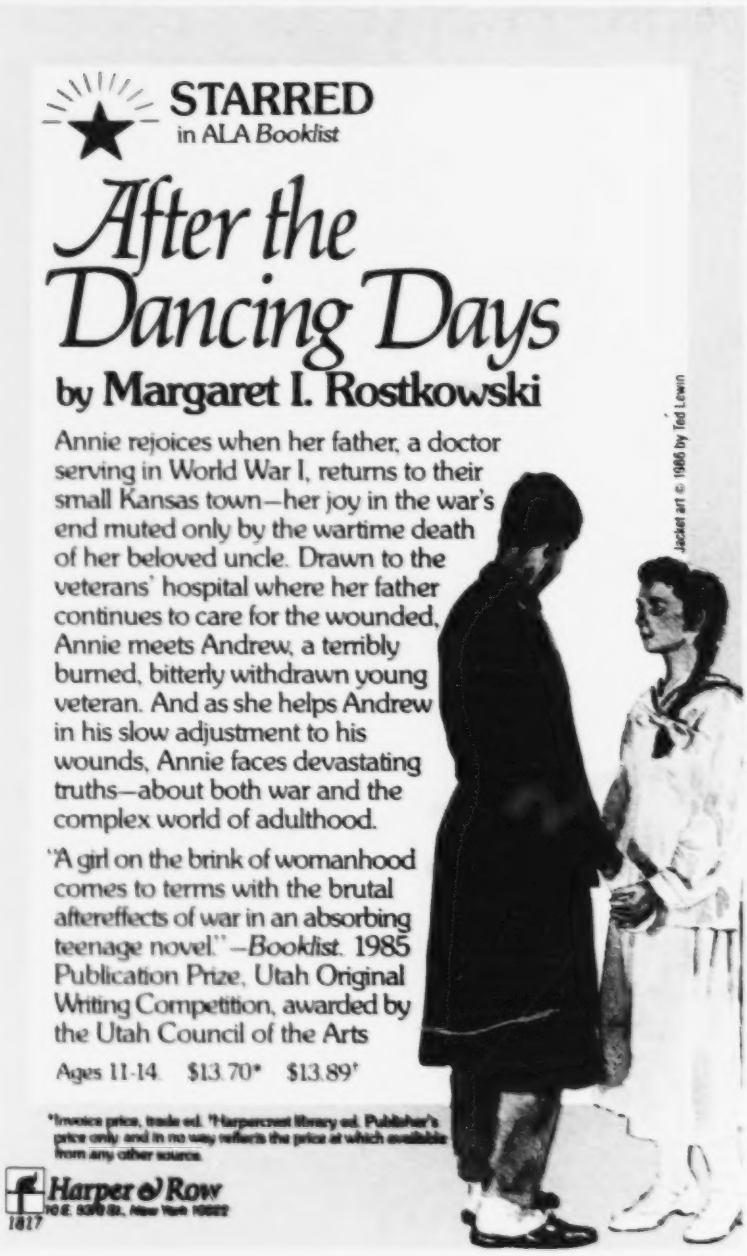
The Horn Book, Inc., announced the publication of Volume V in its series "Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books." This volume includes information about books, authors and illustrators which received the awards between 1976 and 1985. The book which costs $24.95 can be obtained from The Horn Book, Inc., 31 St. James Ave., Boston, MA 02116.

In 1972 the first edition of *Pass the Poetry, Please!* by Lee Bennett Hopkins was enthusiastically welcomed into the library of books about teaching literature to children. Finally, in 1987 Hopkins has extensively revised, updated and enlarged his readable text. The book contains four sections: "Poetry is so Many Things. . . ", an introduction in which Hopkins talks about the place of poetry today in children's books; he credits much of its new found acceptability to the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children, established in 1977. "From Mother Goose to Dr. Seuss-and Beyond," is a section in which Hopkins discusses bringing poems and children together. Sprinkled throughout the section are poems that he suggests for use with young readers and listeners. Throughout this section of the book he introduces his readers to hundreds of poets, many well-known poets for children, others known for their adult works and still others not yet known. In part three, "Butterflies Can be in Bellies!," Hopkins provides teachers with hundreds of ideas for getting children to write poetry. The methods he suggests are much more natural than the formula poems found in many classrooms. He acknowledges the fact that writing poetry is hard work and children should be encouraged to rework their poems again and again, until they "feel" right. The final section, "The Water's Starting to Bleed!" gives teachers advice in how to bring poetry into the classroom. In this section he suggests ways to connect poetry with all the language arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking. Even without the four appendixes, this book is a valuable source, but with them the book is a must for every school library. The appendixes include extensive bibliographies of poetry books dealing with contemporary issues, paperback volumes of poetry, sources of educational materials and Mother Goose collections. (Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Pass the Poetry Please!*. Harper & Row, 1987. $18.95.)

Another useful reference book from Greenwood Press, *Eastern Europe in Children's Literature* by Frances F. Povsic, has been published. This book discusses children's stories from Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Traditional and modern works are included. Over three hundred sources with careful annotations are provided. (Povsic, Frances F. *Eastern Europe in Children's Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Books*. Greenwood Press, 1986. $35.00.)

Awards

Several Vineyard Video Tapes have been recognized *Jay O'Callahan: Six Stories About Little Heroes* (K-8) was awarded first place in the Language Arts category: Fiction for Young People at the National Educational Film Festival. Also the NCTE committee on video resources has unanimously endorsed *Jay O'Callahan: Masterclass in Storytelling, Orange Cheeks* and *Teaching Shakespeare: New Approaches from the Folger Shakespeare Library*.


STARRED
in ALA Booklist
After the Dancing Days
by Margaret I. Rostkowski
Annie rejoices when her father, a doctor serving in World War I, returns to their small Kansas town—her joy in the war's end muted only by the wartime death of her beloved uncle. Drawn to the veterans' hospital where her father continues to care for the wounded, Annie meets Andrew, a terribly burned, bitterly withdrawn young veteran. And as she helps Andrew in his slow adjustment to his wounds, Annie faces devastating truths—about both war and the complex world of adulthood.
"A girl on the brink of womanhood comes to terms with the brutal aftereffects of war in an absorbing teenage novel." —Booklist. 1985 Publication Prize, Utah Original Writing Competition, awarded by the Utah Council of the Arts
Ages 11-14 $13.70* $13.89†
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In Error

The fall issue of the *ALAN Review* incorrectly listed prices of two Vineyard Video Productions. The correct prices are as follows: Jay O'Callahan: Masterclass in Storytelling, $129.95 and *Orange Cheeks*, $39.95.

Call for Papers and Articles

The Winter 1988 issue of the *ALAN Review* will be a theme issue on "fantastic" literature (fantasy, science fiction, fairy tale...) for young adults. Please submit articles of no more than 12 double spaced, typed pages dealing with fantastic literature and its place in the classroom by July 31, 1987 to **ALAN Review**, University of North Carolina at Asheville, One University Heights, Asheville, NC 28804.

The Children's Literature Association of the Modern Language Association is interested in papers dealing with "Childhood Reading Experiences." This session (MLA Meetings, December 27-30, 1987, San Francisco, CA) will include: "–discussions by critics of their own

STILL TRIXIE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Ellen A. Seay
Virginia Commonwealth University

I just love Trixie Belden, even after all these years.

You see, Trixie and I had a lot in common. We both were trapped in awkward adolescence. Both of us were cursed with curly blond hair that did what it wanted despite our best efforts. As far as tomboys go, both Trixie and I were past the stage of whaling the heck out of the boy down the street. But we both still strayed off into the woods, had little brothers who drove us crazy and rode our bikes - as if they were the horses we both would have died for. We both bored easily, schemed a lot and were always on the lookout for an adventure. Trixie always found it; Ellen seldom did.

Yes, I really liked Trixie because she always took me with her, no questions asked. She let me join her club. She introduced me to Honey, her new best friend with a rich house and fabulous horses. She took me with her when she spent the night over at Honey's and when they went swimming and riding. She introduced me to Jim and told me all about the mansion. I even kept her secrets, just like I promised. I didn't tell Jim's cruel stepfather that Jim Frayne, heir to the Frayne millions, was secretly hiding in his uncle's crumbling mansion. Hell, I got to hating cruel Jonesy as much as Jim did.

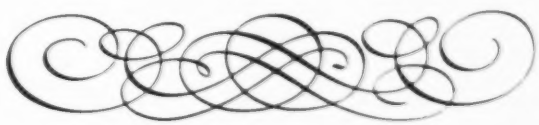
What I especially liked about Trixie, though was that she was ornery, cussed and down-right headstrong. Her parents kept trying to tone her down a bit, but they never tried to break her spirit. Trixie just plain had a good heart. Since we were so much alike, I figured if I hung around with her long enough my folks would see I had a good heart too. I was just trapped in a gawky 13-year-old body, run by a 210-year-old mind.

Yes, Trixie was great to have around because she was always in some kind of trouble, but it was good trouble. For instance, my folks never caught me sneaking with Trixie and Honey out of the house at night. They never objected when we went horseback riding by ourselves. And they probably suspected I was helping Trixie and Honey maintain runaway Jim in the old mansion, but they never were sure about it. I was plenty cool, you know. Trixie taught me that. As a matter of fact, most of the time the folks thought I was upstairs in my room reading. That was always my best alibi.

The best thing about Trixie, though, is that she's like an old shoe. No matter how long I go without seeing or visiting her, I can still flip through those yellowed pages and call on her. She and Honey and Trixie's older brothers, Brian and Mart, have formed a new club, the Bob-Whites of Glen. Jim Frayne is back, and Honey's rich parents have adopted him. They've even made a club house out of the old gatehouse and solved a few crimes...ah...but that's another story.

Anyway, the door to the clubhouse is always open when I want to go in. It's nice to know some things never change. And it's crossed my mind that maybe I shouldn't be so selfish about my friends. I could introduce them around, you know? There are a lot of girls between ten and 15 who would probably get along with Trixie just fine. They probably wouldn't find Trixie in the classroom, though, even though she's darned smart and infinitely clever. It seems that boys in that awkward age don't take much to sleuthing females, especially ones who want to grow up and be detectives. Most of those guys don't care what those old girls think, and teachers trying to introduce them to Trixie would probably have their hands full. No, I think I'd be better to let those young girls catch Trixie after school. They could go riding or swimming or sleuthing and be home in plenty of time for supper.

Anyway, if you see her, tell her Ellen says hello. I stay pretty busy these days studying and trying to do a little detective work of my own. Tell her I'm working on "The Case of the Missing Sleep." I might have it solved by June. If I do, tell her I might join her and Honey for a quick ride through the woods. And tell your friends that Ellen sent you. She'd like that a lot.



childhood reading and its relationship to their current interest in children's literature as adults; . . . –reports of reading by other children–one's own children, groups of children in schoolrooms, etc.; surveys of titles or discussions of attempts to teach critical skills–discussions of the reading done by child characters in either children's or adult novels." Send queries, detailed abstracts by February 1, 1987 and completed papers by September 1, 1987 to: Perry Nodelman, Professor of English, University of Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada R3B 2EP.

Conferences, Workshops and Study Tours

Author Richard Peck is a guest lecturer on a three week course in England entitled, "Anglo American Heritage of Literature for Children and Young Adults," July 9-30, 1987. The course involves classes, other guest speakers and tours. Three hours graduate credit is available from School of Library and Information Science, Louisiana State University. For more information contact: Dr. Stephen Cooper, Office of Academic Programs Abroad, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, (504) 388-6801.

The Third Annual Virginia Hamilton Lectureship on Minority Group Experiences in Children's Literature will commemorate the life and works of Langston Hughes. Nikki Giovanni will be the keynote speaker. The lectureship will include presentations by Hamilton, Kenneth Marantz, Mary Krogness and Amy McClure. The lectureship will be held Friday, April 10, 1987 at Kent State University. Contact Anthony L. Manna, Department of Teacher Development and Curriculum Studies, 404 White Hall, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242, (216) 672-2472. ●

"NOW THAT YOU ASKED..."

Ruth Cline, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
Elizabeth Poe, Arvada West High School, Jefferson County, CO

Mr. Wilbur Ward, Williamsport, PA has asked us about references, research and people who are involved in the history and current uses of historical fiction in the American public school. Since this issue of ALAN is devoted to historical fiction and nonfiction, it seemed appropriate to answer Mr. Ward's question at this time.

We are glad that Mr. Ward is planning to research this problem for his dissertation, because we have found little on the topic in current sources. There are some particular topics which have been summarized in articles: "War and Peace in Adolescent Literature," Lander (ERIC document Ed 248 169, 1981); "Making a Case for Biography," (ERIC document ED 255 940, 1985); "Wars and Rumors of War," Nelms and Nelms (*English Journal*, March 1986). But a more comprehensive look at this topic was elusive. The *Illinois School Journal's* article, "Revitalizing History Teaching through Historical Fiction" (Cain, 1983), sounded promising.

In considering the question, we feel there *should* be more interest in using historical fiction, both in history/social studies classes and English/language arts classes. We recognize an element of subjectivity in historical "facts;" history is the product of an historian's imagination and interpretation. Historians shape their interpretation of the past in today's contemporary climate, which must influence them and their views of people and events.

How can we get young people involved in reading either historical fiction or nonfiction? Many times, students seek to dismiss history as irrelevant to their lives. The direct involvement of students in researching and writing about some facet of their own community may help them understand the need for selecting details, drawing conclusions and clarity in style for historical writing. Students could discover the historical value of researching newspaper files, documents in the courthouse and tombstones in the cemeteries. Interviewing community leaders, elderly citizens or older family members may allow students to probe the human memory. Developing a timeline for an individual family or for the community will allow students to see relationships of many people and events. Putting state, national or world highlights on the same timeline may help students see the intertwining of many occurrences. With this personal approach to history, students may better understand the meaning of objectivity, fact, opinion and accuracy in other contexts.

After such experiences and discussions, students may be more open to critically reading history written by others. Both NCTE bibliographies, *Your Reading* and *Books for You*, have annotations for fiction and nonfiction books which would augment any phase of history.

We hope Mr. Ward will uncover many interesting ideas for teaching historical fiction and that he will share his research with all of us!

Authors' Note: "Now that you asked..." is a column devoted to answering the questions of readers who wish information on young adult literature and its authors, or about the teaching and publishing of this literature. Send questions to: Ruth Cline, School of Education, Box 249, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

THE FERVENT PRAYER OF A TEENAGER'S PARENT

Richard Peck

Oh Higher Power,

And I wish I were–

Give me to know that the easier life is made for the young, the harder they will make it for themselves and each other.

Harden my heart and stop my ears against what Other People let THEIR kids do.

Strike me dumb when I blame a teacher I have never met, for heaven alone knows what that teacher has heard about me.

Let not the coach build his career on the vulnerable flesh of my son.

Spare my daughter the sly pornography of soap operas.

Send summer reading lists so my children won't lose three months of a fertile growing season.

Sharpen my eye as I ransack my child's room to find and destroy the fake I.D.

Embolden my heart as I unplug the telephone from my child's room so that the peer group that rules the school all day will not rule our nights as well.

Stay my hand when I am tempted to buy my children's love with credit cards in their names, or mine.

Strengthen my spine as I impose a curfew, lest my nights be a hell of waiting for the fatal phone call.

And give me ears to hear that when the young cry out for new freedoms, they are demanding old rules.

Amen

THE BACK DOOR

Putting together this issue on historical fiction and nonfiction has been particularly rewarding for me. I remember my own experiences with history and nonfiction in the secondary school classroom. They were boring, at best. We studied history in terms of war. If it didn't happen during a period of confrontation, it wasn't worth knowing. The only nonfiction we read was the textbook, and when forced the encyclopedia to produce canned papers and oral presentations. Dates, battles, people and places are all in one folder in my file cabinet brain. I hated history, or so I thought.

Like many college students in the generation of "all university" or "general" requirements, I was "forced" to take two history courses in order to earn a degree. The first course was a Western Civ varietal. It reinforced my distaste for the subject. The professor was a nice man and far more interested in history than my high school teachers had seemed, but he had little skill in transferring his fascination to us. The book was a survey of the world in two semesters; this is Tuesday, it must be ancient Greece. Because the experience was so dismal, I put off my final history requirement until second semester of my senior year. I had two choices: take one semester of American history or fail to graduate. The day I made the trek to the bookstore to purchase the fire breathing survey text, I was surprised to find no such monster. Instead on the shelf sat a series of books, all biographies and autobiographies, as best I could tell, and a note. "Please do not purchase your books for History 201 before attending class." Along with the other students reading the note, I let out a sigh of disgust, "What's this fool expect from us?" "This is supposed to be a history class, not English." But, my grumbling was just for effect; secretly, I was hopeful. Perhaps, this course would be different. Perhaps, it wouldn't be so bad.

I didn't go so far as to think that I might learn to enjoy history, but that is exactly what happened. The professor met the class the first day with a syllabus and bibliography in hand. He told us to look through the bibliography and attempt to select the five great Americans in whom we were most interested. He waited for a few minutes as we scanned the list. Then be began asking questions about some of the names: "Who was W. E. B. Dubois?" "Who was Mary Cassatt?" "Who on the list do you need more information about so that you can make an informed decision?" We asked dozens of questions; he provided enthusiastic responses. By the end of the hour we had an overview of the course and were aware of many "great" Americans who had never been mentioned in history courses before. He explained that we would select five biographies and read those biographies along with three or four other students in the class. With our groups we would be responsible for presenting to the class as much information as we could get from the biography and any other sources we could find. He would help us tie all this information to the history of our "great country."

The course was incredible. Every day was an adventure. I learned more in one course about American history than I had learned in 16 + years of school. At just about the time we were reading and discussing a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King, he was assassinated. Though the impact of his death was felt across campus, few other students understood the significance of the loss in the way that those of us in History 201 did. Through this course I learned to love history, biography and other works of nonfiction. But, more importantly, I began to understand the impact of the individual, for good and bad. Perhaps, this course, more than any other, changed my life. It is indeed the interaction of great writing, creative teaching and willing young minds that has the potential to effect history.

Charlie Reed

Is young adult literature one of your special interests? If so, ALAN welcomes your membership.

ALAN Membership
ALAN/NCTE
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership is open to anyone interested in literature for adolescents. Although ALAN is an assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, members do not necessarily have to belong to the parent organization. Institutional memberships are welcomed. This form may be reproduced. Memberships will also be accepted in letter form. Journal included in membership fee.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Make check or money order payable to ALAN and mail with this form to:

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